Three Fundamental Principles of the Spiritual Life

Meschler

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J. J. McGuane

THREE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

BY

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FOREWORD

A certain Persian prince was a great friend to learning. From all directions he gathered together learned writings for his library, and wherever he went his books had to accompany him. They, however, became after a time no small burden. He then commissioned some learned men to abridge the wisdom of the accumulated books into a number of volumes that could be conveniently carried on a camel. But as he found even this too laborious an undertaking after a time, the various books were further epitomized into *one* book, and finally this single volume into a single rule of life which the prince could carry everywhere without any trouble. And so all was easier and better.

That is the thought which underlies these pages. There are countless and voluminous books on the spiritual life. Who knows the mere titles of them all or can reckon their number? There is certainly nothing to deplore in this; one can scarcely write or read

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enough on this subject—the highest and best a man can study here below. But who can read all these books and remember what they contain? It would, then, certainly be an advantage if we could acquire the science of the spiritual life—the science of the saints—in a simpler and shorter form, without losing its essence. It is indeed the spirit of our time to arrange everything that concerns our life as simply, easily, and practically as possible. Our own instinct is to simplify everything as we grow older. We become wonderfully simple as time goes on. Our whole philosophy of life resolves itself into one principle which controls the mind, which influences, directs and guides the whole life. The nearer we come to God, our last End, the more we partake of His Divine simplicity. At the end God alone is all to us. The same is the case with regard to divine Truth. In one truth all are contained. One single truth, considered seriously and practically, is enough to make us saints.

In these pages, then, the whole spiritual life is set forth, simplified and reduced to three fundamental principles without which the most complicated, the most sublime ascetical practices are of little avail, for they

lack what is most needful and most essential. Such practices, alone, would not lead us to the end we seek. But with these fundamental principles, really embraced and carried into effect, we are truly practising the life of divine grace. And if at any time in the course of our spiritual life we perceive that we are not as we should be, let us test ourselves by these three principles, and see whether our practice is in conformity with their observance. We shall by this means assuredly find where we are wrong, and in order to resume our struggle after perfection we have only to consider seriously these principles and to submit all our life and all our endeavors to their guidance.

A clever writer has entitled his book on life in the world: "Wisdom in the Waistcoat-pocket." Here is "Christian Asceticism in the Waistcoat-pocket." The little volume gives the quintessence of the spiritual life—its exercise in miniature—expressed in three leading principles. "All good things are three," says the proverb; so all the spiritual life rests on three leading principles. They alone, interlaced, mutually balanced and well adjusted, form the setting of the precious pearl of the wise, Christian perfection,—a

jewel of such price that the wise merchant, who seeks for precious things, willingly and joyfully takes any amount of pains and gives all that he has to secure it.

THE AUTHOR.

Luxemburg, August 8, 1909.

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THREE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

THE FIRST FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE: PRAYER

Prayer is the beginning of all that is good in man. Therefore to become familiar with prayer, to value it greatly, to love it and use it rightly and zealously is an inestimable possession both for time and eternity.

May what follows help us towards acquiring it.

CHAPTER I

WHAT IT IS TO PRAY

1. To pray is the simplest thing on earth and in human life. It is essentially simple, just because it is so necessary.

2. To pray needs no learning, no eloquence, no money, no earthly recommendation. It does not even require any special feeling of

devotion. Sensible consolation in prayer is only an accompaniment and quite a secondary matter. Sweetness in its exercise does not in the least depend upon us. God gives it, and we receive it thankfully. We can pray more easily with such help, but we can also pray without it. No matter whether our feelings seem in tune with Sunday or with weekdays, we always can and we always must pray.

3. In order to pray we need only to know God and ourselves, to understand Who He is and who we are, how immeasurable is God's fatherly goodness and how unfathomable our own misery. Faith and the catechism are the only knowledge we need bring to prayer, and our very necessity pleads our cause. For prayer itself, only a few thoughts are requisite, the fewer the better—few desires and few words. But the words must at least be from the heart, or else there is no prayer. And is there any man who is really without some thoughts and some desires? This is, then, the whole apparatus we require for the noble work of prayer. God is ever ready to give His grace, and He gives it to each and all.

4. To pray is simply to speak with God,

to hold converse with Him by adoration, praise, thanksgiving, petition and deprecation. Some theologians say that prayer is a report we present to our good God, or an audience He grants us. This expresses the truth in too formal a manner. Many of us can present no report, and to speak of an audience is too formal and stiff. Let us think of prayer as a familiar conversation with a good and kindly man. We trust him in the simplest way with all that we have most at heart—with our sorrow and joy, our hopes and fears; and in return we receive from him advice and warning, help and consolation. We speak together of the most important matters, quite plainly, often quite without emotion or a spark of feeling or excitement; all that matters is that we should speak honestly and earnestly. So let us converse with God in prayer; the more simply, the better, so long as our heart is in it.

5. We often spoil our prayer, and make a hard and disappointing business of it, because we know not how to use it and because we take a wrong view of what prayer is. If we do but tell God what is in our heart, we pray well. Every road, they say, leads to Rome, and every thought finds its way to

God. If only our prayer is simply offered, it is the right kind of prayer. What can we offer our loving God that is sublime or clever? If we know nothing, and if we have nothing to say, let us tell Him so. That is at once a prayer, a glorifying of God and an emphatic petition for ourselves.

CHAPTER II

HOW GREAT AND EXCELLENT PRAYER IS

Our thoughts are the image of our soul. The more exalted its thoughts, the greater and nobler the soul. So long as we give ourselves solely to what is earthly, visible and created, our soul will never reach beyond transitory and passing things; if, on the other hand, we think of God, our soul comes to share in the greatness of the Godhead. Only angels and men can think of God, and to think rightly of Him is the highest thought possible to a created being. Thought cannot rise higher than the Highest. Now it is in prayer that man raises his thoughts to God and has communion with Him. Man is united with nothing so intimately as with the reflection of his soul—his thoughts.

And in this case that reflection is God Himself, the highest, the most beautiful, the most exalted, in heaven and upon earth. Except in Holy Communion, we can, here below, in no way become so intimately united with God as by prayer.

To be able to think of God is a special honor vouchsafed to man. To have intercourse with men, whom one can see and hear, needs no great skill. But to have intercourse with an invisible purely spiritual Being requires something more, and to exercise this privilege aright demands a high and important spiritual training and almost a divine manner of life. The plain servant of God, who, as he must, knows how to hold communion in prayer with the Divine Majesty, may enter God's court before all the kings and emperors in the world. The reason why prayer seems so hard and tedious to the ordinary man is because of weariness; but weariness is in the man, not in his prayer. He is earth-bound and has no higher training than what earth can give. Weariness in prayer is, then, not a good spiritual sign. On the other hand, facility and an agile spirit in prayer is a sign of true domination of the spirit over the sensuality

and earthliness of our nature. We must, then, hold fast and convince ourselves of the truth that we can do nothing higher or more sublime than pray.

2. It is a marvelous honor for a man that he should be able to lift up his soul to God in prayer, but yet more full of honor is the gracious bending down of God to man. We are in the depths here upon earth; high above us is God in heaven. The golden bridge upon which He descends to us is prayer. It is truly a marvelous and touching revelation of God's love to man, of His munificence, goodness and condescension, that He should say to man: "Pray for all that thou desirest; come to Me when thou wilt; enter My presence announced or unannounced, thou wilt ever be welcome; all that I have I offer to thee." Is not this boundless freedom which God allows to prayer a sure proof that we are allied to God, that we are created for communion with Him, that we are His family and His children? How unspeakable a grace! How infinitely great He is, and yet He always has time to listen to us and allows us to seek His presence. Nowhere are we received so sincerely, so lovingly, so heartily, as by Him. He is our

true and eternal Home, and nowhere are we so truly at home as when we are with Him.

3. How immeasurable are our privileges! And how little we prize them! If God were to distribute money and food, all would run after Him, as of old the Jews sought the Saviour when He had multiplied the loaves. But He offers the honor of speech and intercourse with Himself, and men set no value on it. Many a one is even ashamed of prayer. Does not this mean that he is ashamed of the dear God and renounces his own highest privilege? The man who forgets and neglects prayer does not know his own misery and his own dishonor.

CHAPTER III

THE COMMAND TO PRAY

1. God has permitted us to pray, and so prayer is our right. He has commanded us to pray; and so prayer is our duty.

2. The command to pray belongs also to the old Law. The tables of that Law are as old as man, and are written as a natural law in his heart. The first table binds man to religion and the worship of God. Man

comes into the world with this obligation by virtue of his origin. Man must recognize and honor God as his Creator. So the world has never been without religion, and thus it evinces its relationship to God.

3. There has never been a religion without prayer. It is always and essentially a religious practice, its end being to pay God the honor that is His due. But it is more than this. It is the chief practice, the soul, as it were, of religion. The whole of religion, indeed, rests on prayer, proves its reality and sustains itself by prayer, whether public or private.

4. To ordain prayer is, therefore, to ordain the practice of religion. And on this account the Saviour, ratifying the ancient law, taught us to pray both by word and example, and Himself appointed a form of prayer. We have to thank His Church that we know precisely how this great natural law of prayer, so stringent in its claim, is to be fulfilled. Our God is a living God, and His creative power is continually renewed in our behalf by His preservation of us and by all He does for us, and we owe Him our prayers in recognition of His goodness. Therefore mankind has always prayed, in

accordance with a divinely implanted instinct. And as widely as God may extend His creative power from world to world, so widely will spread the circles of prayer from His rational creatures. There is but One Who has no need to pray—God Himself, the fullness of all good. But all creatures are dependent on His goodness, and therefore must pray to Him.

5. God has ordained prayer on His own account as well as ours.

Not from any need of His does God require us thus to acknowledge Him—for He has need of nothing—but because of His justice and holiness. He is our Lord, our Father, the Well-spring of all our good. He cannot deny Himself and give His honor to another. But the refusal of the homage of prayer on the part of the creature is nothing short of apostasy from God. Therefore on His own account God must bid us pray.

Looked at from our side, prayer is ordained by Him, not so much in order that we may receive, as that we may give and be able to give. We are never worthy of His gifts nor fittingly disposed to receive them, and we must become duly prepared and disposed. Prayer effects this; prayer is, so to

speak, essentially an act of the virtue of religion. Consciously or unconsciously we always set before us, when we pray, the intention of honoring and acknowledging God. That lies in the very nature of prayer, and we cannot alter it. But the recognition which we thus owe to God is a great homage that must come from our very hearts. In prayer we humbly acknowledge our need, our helplessness and insufficiency, we acknowledge God's power, God's goodness, God's faithfulness to His promises and our absolute confidence in Him. When we pray, we truly celebrate divine worship in our hearts, we sanctify ourselves, draw down upon us God's benefits and fit ourselves to receive His graces. Thus by prayer we do not, properly speaking, dispose Him to give, but we dispose and prepare ourselves to receive. That is the difference between the prayers we make to men and those we make to God. In the one case we dispose the man to whom we prefer our petition, in the other we dispose ourselves.

It is, too, most fitting and most necessary for us humbly to confess our poverty and our need before God and thus to magnify His gifts. And this we do by prayer.

6. Prayer, being the practice of Divine worship and religion, is not only a means by which to obtain favors from God, but an end, the immediate end of our life. We are created by God to praise, to adore and to serve Him. From this point of view we cannot pray enough. By prayer we attain our aim and end, so far as we can attain it here below. It is this thought that has called the contemplative orders into being. Even in heaven, there will be eternal prayer. Whatever on earth maintains the glory of God, that is prayer. Where prayer is wanting, there the Kingdom of God is wanting in men's hearts. Of how much prayer our unhappy religious strife has robbed our country! In whole districts the Holy Sacrifice and the praise of God, as offered in the cloister, have vanished. This is yet another reason for our praying, that we may make up for what God's Kingdom has thus lost.

7. If this is what prayer is, who can wonder that all earnest men, all earnest Christians, pray, and pray much? With them religion, and therefore prayer, comes before all else. We Christians are above all, as God's ancient people were, a praying people. The Old Covenant had no Plato and no Aris-

totle, but it had true prayer, and with it the true knowledge and worship of God. Our Christian religion began with prayer in the Cenacle at Jerusalem. The pagans were astonished at the constant prayers of Christians, whose churches were and are true houses of prayer, while the pagans did not even know what prayer truly is.

This is the exalted and serious way in which we must regard prayer. It concerns religion, which is man's highest and most glorious possession in this world. Mankind in general has ever recognized this. Pantheists cannot do so; they do not pray because they deify themselves and hold that they are themselves a part of God: Materialists cannot; their thoughts do not rise above the dust of the earth: nor can the followers of Kant; they imagine they can dispense themselves from prayer, because they do not or will not comprehend the proofs of God's existence: nor yet can the disciples of Schleiermacher; they abstain from prayer until they are in a devout frame of mind. What is all this in comparison with the immense testimony of mankind in all ages, of reason and of faith, to the obligation of prayer?

CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT MEANS OF GRACE

Light, air, nourishment—without these we cannot imagine life. So is prayer to the spiritual life. Without it spiritual life cannot exist. Thus prayer is the great unconditional means of grace; if we would be saved, we must pray.

1. Here certain incontrovertible truths and principles find their application. Without divine grace there is no salvation; without prayer, in the case of those who have reached years of discretion, no grace can be looked for. Prayer is, then, as necessary as grace itself. God has, indeed, ordained the sacraments as means of grace, but in many connections prayer is even more important than the sacraments. The sacraments confer certain definite graces; prayer can, in some circumstances, obtain all graces. The sacraments are not everywhere and always of precept, but prayer is always so. Therefore it has been truly said: "He who knows how to pray aright, knows also how to live aright." By means of prayer man provides himself with all that is necessary to a good

life. If this be so, then the following weighty assertions are true: No one can hope for any grace except through prayer; all confidence that is not based on prayer is a vain confidence; and God owes us nothing unless we pray, because He has promised everything to prayer. Generally, He gives no grace that is not prayed for; when He does, it is the grace of prayer itself.

2. Now these are universal truths. But there are certain definite things in the Christian life for which prayer is absolutely necessary. First of all are God's commandments. We must keep them if we are to be saved; but of ourselves we have neither the power nor the grace to keep them. We may even go further and say that we never have the grace to fulfill them without fear of falling. You may say: "I can do nothing and suffer nothing," and it may be that you have not yet the grace; but you have the grace to pray. Therefore God commands nothing that is impossible; on the contrary, He gives you the grace itself that you need, or at least the power of prayer through which you receive the grace.

In the second place, there are our tempta-

tions. In our own natural strength we cannot overcome them; but the temptations are not so great that we cannot pray. We are weak only because we do not pray. The saints were victorious, because they prayed. Without prayer they would have been defeated like us. This is true especially with regard to sensual temptations, which more than all others make us blind to the pregnant consequences of sin, cause us to forget all good principles and efface from our hearts the fear of punishment. Without prayer, there is nothing for us but spiritual ruin.

Finally, we cannot be saved without the grace of perseverance. But it is a special gift of grace, when God calls us to die, that we should be found in His sanctifying grace, that so death may be to us the call to a blessed immortality. That is perseverance, which, according to Saint Augustine, is so great, so extraordinary a gift of grace that we cannot merit it, but only obtain it through humble prayer. But not even to pray for it shows how unworthy we are of it.

Thus we complete the circle that shows us the absolute necessity of prayer. Even for temporal things we must pray, and how much

more for those that are eternal! The choice indeed lies between prayer and spiritual ruin.

3. This is the law of life. But why has God included everything under the necessity for prayer? Could He not impart His grace to us without our prayer? The question is a superfluous one; what concerns us is not what God could do, but what He has done. He has ordained prayer as a means whereby we are to obtain His grace, and He has every right so to do. He is free, Lord of His own grace, and it is His to appoint the way and means by which it is to be obtained. He has appointed prayer as a means, and that is all that concerns us. But man is also free, and must co-operate in his salvation. Prayer demonstrates at once the free co-operation of man, and God's freedom in the appointment of the means. In God's great scheme for the world's salvation we recognize both His freedom and our own; both on His side and ours this freedom operates as a conjoint and mighty motive towards the fulfillment of His ultimate design—man's salvation and God's glory. Only by such co-operation can man be worthy of his eternal salvation. Surely, then, prayer is the least God can demand from man. To be unwilling to do the

least justly excludes him from grace and from heaven.

4. The utterances of Scripture and of theologians with respect to the necessity of prayer are so strong and earnest that they tend to convince one that prayer, as a means of grace, is necessary not only because of God's express precept, but as a result of the natural law. It is certain that Christ gave no positive commands beyond the precepts of faith, hope and charity, and the reception of the Sacraments. If He, in addition, so often and so emphatically commands us to pray, prayer must be involved in the very nature of His appointed way of salvation. For if we suppose that God, whenever possible, rests His work upon the help of subordinate causes and that man, so far as he can, must co-operate in his salvation, God could provide no more natural means of salvation for man than prayer. In fact, one may well ask if there is any other means, when one sees the terrible secularism, devotion to external things, forgetfulness of God, dullness and religious indifference that rule the world from end to end. Our age suffers from a sad and deadly sickness—coldness towards God and all that is supernatural. How

senselessly the worldly man rushes hither and thither until death overtakes him. He sleeps into eternity like the unhappy wanderer on the snow-covered Alps in winter. Who will shake the poor creature out of his deadly unconsciousness? The prayer of his good angel, who leads him to remember and care for his soul, to reflect and examine his conscience. He awakes in his heart the slumbering desire, the home-sickness for another, happier home than this world, a longing after God our Father, Whom he is abandoning and forgetting. The lost son seeks and finds the way back to the Father's house, led by the hand of the angel of prayer. Thus prayer ever destroys and overcomes forgetfulness of God and the tyranny of sin. Besides, in this world there are so many trials, disappointments, and adversities that one who has no consolation must despair and utterly fail. He seeks a confidant, in whose heart he can lay down his cares and sorrows. Who like God is the confidant of our souls? And how otherwise can we find Him than by prayer, which is communion and speech with Him? Prayer is the expiration of our sorrows, our need and our burden and the inspiration of grace, comfort and enlightenment.

"Blessed be God, Who hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me." [1]

CHAPTER V

HOW PRAYER CAN DO ALL THINGS

Prayer brings to pass a whole world of good and beautiful things.

1. In common with all supernatural works, prayer is the cause of merit and satisfaction. But a quite peculiar effect of prayer is the granting of what is prayed for. Man prays and asks, and God hears and grants, not because man merits this, but because he prays. Thus the response corresponds, not to the merit of him who prays, but to the strength of the prayer itself. And nothing shows us as this does the eminence of prayer, that has such great power with God.

2. And how far does the power of God's response extend? As far as man's need—as far as the divine compassion and the divine might. Nothing is excluded; God's promise is, "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive," "Whatsoever you shall ask, that will I do." [2]

[1] Psalm lxv, 20.
[2] St. Matth. xxl, 22 (vii, 7). St. John xiv, 13.

Man must make no exception where God makes none. Whatever, then, we desire, that is reasonable and well-pleasing to God, we may pray for—especially spiritual gifts. The more necessary and the more excellent the gift, the more confidently we may trust that it will be granted us. Only as to temporal things must we be careful; there are temporal gifts which, if God granted them, would be our punishment.

Holy Scripture composes a splendid picture of the efficacy of prayer. Israel on the desert-way, Moses and Josue, the mighty deeds of the Judges and the Machabees, the miracles of our Lord and the Apostles, the whole history of God's chosen people and of the Catholic Church, are the history of prayer and its operations. It is a constant and marvelous alternation between human need, human prayer, and divine help and answer to prayer. Before the power of prayer all natural laws may become for a time suspended. At the word of one who prayed, the sun stood still,[1] and went backwards.[2] As heaven encircles earth, so prayer with its effectual might surrounds all mankind in their journey through this world.

[1] Josue x, 12, 13. [2] 4 Kings xx, 9–11.

3. There is indeed a world, in great measure, certainly, invisible to our eyes and only known to heaven, a world in which the efficacy of prayer is nobly and gloriously manifested. It is the world of souls that are being cleansed, trained, enlightened and sanctified. Nothing, in the end, can withstand the gentle, gradual, penetrating efficacy of prayer; no passion, no force of trial or danger but is overcome. Quietly it makes its way into a man's thoughts and views, his will and sentiments; through prayer he becomes another man. How hard it is to do anything with cold iron; put it in the fire, and you can make what you like of it on the anvil. Pray and persevere in prayer, and you control your passions as you will. "Behold, he prayeth," [1] said the Saviour to Ananias of Paul the convert. The Lord by His power cast down Saul, the enemy "breathing out threatenings and slaughter." Prayer made him an Apostle. There is nothing to fear from a man, or for a man, who prays.

What philosophy strove to give man of old —clearness of vision, calm of spirit, moderation of the affections and courage in trials— that prayer bestowed on the first Christians.

[1] Acts ix, 11.

Prayer was their school of learning and metaphysics, the lever with which they uplifted the pagan world on every side. Prayer is the strong hand of the Church and her whole statesmanship. If a spoiler draws near, she flies to God, she prays and conquers, she casts down the enemy or converts him.

4. In what, then, does the mystery of the efficacy of prayer consist? In the union of man with God. What cannot man do by himself in the natural order? Is not his power astonishing? What, then, if he works with God, if he relies on Him and secures on his side God's providence, power and wisdom? What will then be the limits of his power? What cause for wonder if miracles come to pass? For through prayer man becomes an instrument in God's hand and has a share in the glorious result of His Divine work.

To this alliance which is concluded between God and man by prayer, man brings nothing but his own weakness, which he acknowledges before God in prayer and on account of which he implores the Divine help. But God comes to meet him with His goodness, power, and faithfulness. In this great truth, that we must mark well and ever hold fast, is the

most glorious consolation—a consolation that is ours in prayer, not by merit on our part, but by the Divine goodness and mercy. These are the effectual causes of our prayers being heard. Weakness ever prevails with true greatness. We should assuredly not refuse the prayer of a little creature that begged its life of us. The little child in the family can do nothing, but yet possesses all. It lives by its weakness. It asks and receives everything. In comparison with the beasts, man appears to disadvantage in many ways. The beast comes into the world with its clothing, with its tools and weapons. How long man remains utterly helpless! And so God stretches out His wise and strong hand, and provides him with all he needs. Prayer, in a spiritual sense, is this hand. Through it he nourishes, clothes, adorns, defends himself, with it he can do all that he requires. It is the Christian's dynamic force. Only we must observe its laws. By means of prayer, man has a place and a voice in the council of God the Three in One, whither all the causes of the world come for arbitration. There is nothing for which man's voice cannot plead. Thus a simple, humble Christian really makes the history of the world by his

prayers. So it ever was. The destinies of Christendom were not only decided on the battlefield, beside the Milvian Bridge, or in the torture-chambers of the confessors, but also in the silence of the catacombs where the Christians prayed, under the palm of a Paul the Hermit and in the cave of an Anthony. The efficacy of prayer is immeasurably great, and we do not know, indeed, all that we can accomplish by it. We gain possession of the dear God Himself, Who wills to be weak only against the assaults of prayer. It, as it were, does Him violence,[1] because He so wills. This violence God loves, and this weakness does not degrade but exalts Him. Let this truth instill courage into our hearts and inspire us with confidence in prayer, so that much—yes, that all things—may become possible to us.

CHAPTER VI

THE RIGHT WAY TO PRAY

If our prayer has no result, the fault is not God's, but ours. There may be three reasons for this: either we are at fault ourselves,

[1] Tertull. *De Oratione,* Cap. 29.

or we pray in a wrong manner, or we ask for the wrong things. "Mali, male, mala." Our prayers, then, must always possess the following characteristics.

We must know what we are offering to God, *i. e.,* we must not pray thoughtlessly, without attention, and with dissipated minds. The important point is, not *willfully* to be distracted, nor deliberately to suffer dissipation of spirit. How can God listen to us if we do not even listen to ourselves, and do not know what we are saying? It can be no honor or joy to our Holy Guardian Angel to present such prayer as this to God. Even for our own sakes we must avoid inattention, for wilful distraction at prayer is sin, and gains for us not grace, but punishment. But distractions that are not willful, but which happen against our will, do not rob us of merit or of satisfaction, or of the fulfillment of our petitions, but only of the enjoyment and sensible sweetness of prayer. The thoughtless chatter of a child does not displease his father and mother. God knows our weakness and has patience with us.

In the second place, we must be earnest about our prayers, we must throw our hearts into them, if we are to be heard. We must

pray zealously and with real desire; and such zeal does not consist in the multitude of the prayers we say, but in the part our will takes in them. The incense does not rise towards heaven unless the flame consumes it and lifts the sacred fragrance heavenwards. Zeal is the soul of prayer. God listens to the heart, not to the lips. It is always a solemn thing to hold communion with God, and it is ever something important for which we pray; therefore zeal and earnest desire are always needed. But since we do not trust to the power of our own prayers to gain what we desire, we betake ourselves to the help of our fellow-men in common and public prayer. We invoke the saints and the Name of Jesus, to which is promised in special measure the power of impetration.[1]

In the third place, our prayer must be humble. We come to God as beggars, not as creditors; as sinners, not to strike a bargain on terms of equality. Nothing becomes us but the utterest humility, which pleases God and wins His grace, while it stirs us up to be earnest in our prayers.

The fourth important characteristic of prayer is trust and confidence. Everything

[1] St. John xvi, 23.

invites us to this confidence. God Himself wills that we should pray, and wills to listen to us. We are His creatures and His children. He knows far better than we the value of this claim of ours to be heard. Never must we forget that in prayer we are, first and last, dealing with the eternal goodness and mercy of God. That Divine mercy has the first and the decisive word. The more spiritual the gift for which we pray, the more confident we may be that our prayer will be granted. With regard to temporal favors, let us be on our guard against two mistakes: first, praying unconditionally for such favors, which under the circumstances may be hurtful to us; and secondly, imagining that it is altogether wrong to pray for them. Temporal gifts are gained by prayer offered in the right way, and God wills to be recognized as the Author and Source of temporal gifts and on this account has Himself ordained, in the Paternoster, a petition for them.

The fifth mark of prayer is courage. This plays a great rôle in what the Sacred Scriptures tell us of prayer. We must pray, always pray and never cease to pray,[1] and never omit prayer either through indolence,

[1] St. Luke xviii, 1.

discouragement, distrust, or disinclination. And we always pray if we never omit this duty at the appointed times, just as we say we "always" take our food, if we do not omit to do so at the regular hours. If the dear God delays granting our petition, we should think we are not yet sufficiently prepared to receive what we ask, or that He is testing our good will, and we should remember how often we have kept *Him* waiting. In the meantime we are losing nothing; on the contrary, He rewards each renewed prayer with fresh merit. We dare not forget that God is not our servant, bound to fulfill our every wish. He is our Father. He gives what is good, and when it is good, for us. Our business is to pray, His, to grant; we had best leave it to Him.

Courage also makes us pray much and as often as we can. We must pray much because we have so much and so many to pray for. He who only prays for himself and his own little affairs does not fill his place in the world and knows but little of the power and efficacy of prayer. Our prayer is the prayer of a child of God, and extends to all the concerns of the Church and of the human race. And how many and what important affairs, on which in great measure

depend the glory of God and the salvation of souls, wait every moment upon God's determination! All the affairs of the world belong to our prayers, are ours to lay before God and commend to Him. Thus to pray is to pray in a truly apostolic, Catholic, and divinely-human way. So our Saviour prayed, and so He teaches us to pray in the Our Father. If at any time we do not know what else to pray for, let us travel in spirit round the countries of the world, and commend to God the important affairs which are there in suspense. They all call for the help of our prayers. We must, lastly, pray much in order to learn to pray well. It is by prayer that we learn best and most quickly how to pray, just as we learn to walk, read, and write, by walking, reading and writing. If we find prayer hard, it is because we pray too little. This is the secret of praying with delight and ease. If we learn to love prayer we shall always find time to pray. We always find or make time for what we love.

CHAPTER VII

VOCAL PRAYER

The necessity of prayer is absolute, its efficacy mighty, its ease consoling. Prayer becomes easy through the great variety of its methods.

Viewed as a whole, there are two methods of prayer, vocal prayer and mental prayer.

1. We pray vocally when we follow a set form of prayer, whether audibly or inaudibly.

2. Without doubt mental prayer is much the better method. Nevertheless, vocal prayer is not to be despised, but on the contrary highly valued. In the first place, it is an address to God, and on that account to be esteemed high above all other use of speech. Further, it is a method of prayer which our nature, which consists of body and soul, altogether demands. With all the faculties God has given us, with body and soul, must we praise Him. In vocal prayer the whole man really prays and with body and soul rejoices in God.[1] Prayer is called in Holy Writ "the fruit of the lips confessing to His name."[2] There are lips enough, alas! that not only do

[1] Psalms xxxiii, 3. [2] Hebrews xiii, 15.

not bring forth the fruit of God's praise, but even revile Him. It is fitting, then, that our lips should offer Him reparation, and this we do by vocal prayer. In the form of prayer the memory finds support, the affections are stimulated by the repetition of the words, and the understanding discovers a noble mine of thoughts and truths. The words are holy types and symbols, which, touched by the magic rod of memory, reveal the prospect of glorious worlds of truth and awaken springs of the sweetest confidence. The Holy Ghost Himself has uttered in the Psalms the most beautiful vocal prayers, and our Saviour held it consonant with His dignity to compose a form of prayer for us. The Church, in her celebration of the Divine Office, employs only vocal prayers, and these are invariably short. The greater part of mankind, too, only know how to practise vocal prayer, and in it they find their eternal salvation. Vocal prayer, then, is the great high-road to heaven, and the golden ladder by which the angels, passing up and down, carry messages from earth and bring down grace upon this world of men. It is vocal prayer, in fine, that throughout the whole world gives unity and fellowship to Christendom in its devotion. Vocal prayer

is the mighty voice of the confession of the Faith, wherewith Christendom arouses, encourages and strengthens itself, combats unbelief and rejoices heaven. It is vocal prayer that arises when Christian people join together in processions of the Blessed Sacrament, other processions and pilgrimages, and as they walk through fields and highways and towns, proclaim their devotion in loud and joyous song, by the holy Rosary and the canticles of the Church. They are the hosts of God here in this visible world, and the sound of their marching and of their voices falls with terror upon the spirit of unbelief. It shows the unbelievers, better than all else, that the world is not yet theirs and that they have to do with a folk that prays. Yes, vocal prayer is a great grace; we can never thank God enough for it, and we must use it unceasingly.

3. Like everything else in this world, vocal prayer has its difficulties. They consist in habitual use and in distraction. They arise from the frequent and daily employment and the continual repetition of the same forms of prayer. To meet them we must use the following means: first, never to begin a prayer (that is, a vocal one), be it ever so short, with-

out first recollecting ourselves for a moment and asking ourselves what we are about to do and begging God that we may do it well. He who would leap over a ditch does well to take a run if he is to be successful. Without this short self-recollection, we both begin and continue with distractions; and one may say with truth that the shorter the prayer, the more need is there of this momentary preparation. Vocal prayer lasts longer and is more successful, the oftener we practise, though but for a moment, this recollection; it helps us more than almost anything else to pray well and earnestly. Secondly, it is equally important to keep our eyes in check; either to close them or to keep them fixed on one point. In order to maintain recollection more easily, it is to be remarked, in the third place, that we can control our attention, either by fixing it on the words, their sense and inward connection, or on the Person to Whom the prayer is said, or on our own need, or our relation to Him to Whom we speak. Any of these methods will secure our sufficient attention; and to change our method from time to time will help us much towards ease and freedom from faults in our use of vocal prayer.

CHAPTER VIII

EXAMPLES OF VOCAL PRAYER

We have no lack of beautiful, sublime and venerable forms of prayer,—venerable and sublime, not only because of their content, but also on account of their authors, who in many cases are no other than God and the Church. It is enough to call to mind the Psalms, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Litanies of the Saints and the prayers of the Divine Office. Let us briefly consider these several forms of prayer.

1. The Psalms are the oldest prayers in the world, and were given us by God Himself. Designed for the most part for the divine worship of the Old Testament, they belong also to the Catholic Church by reason of their Messianic character. They are *our* prayers, and only when offered before the Most Holy Sacrament do they reach their entire signification and fulfillment.

The foundation and object of these songs of prayer are God and man and the mutual relations between God and man through revelation and the Law, with their blessings, hopes, and rewards. God is represented

sometimes as Lawgiver, Leader, King, Teacher, Creator and Father, sometimes as the Messias, as the Bridegroom of the Church, as her royal High Priest and Redeemer by pain and sorrows. Man is presented in wondering contemplation of God's works and mighty deeds, rejoicing in God's Law, weeping over his own disloyalty, sincerely repenting and confessing his sins, giving himself to God in prayer and thanksgiving and longing for the possession of Him. All depths of feeling and affection that can stir the human heart throughout this earthly life ring in these songs and prayers. Sorrow and joy, the most earnest wrestling for the blessing of the Lord, the cry of need in every affliction, find in them their true expression. For every disposition, for every circumstance, there is just the word we need. Thus the Penitential Psalms, especially the Miserere, have become the prayer of penance and the acknowledgment of guilt for the whole world. Whoever possesses a sense and appreciation of the beauty of poetry finds in the Psalms the most beautiful, perfect and sublime examples. We cannot take the Psalter into our hands often enough and learn from it the harmony that will correct the discords of our prayers.

We shall find ourselves in company with all mankind. God Himself puts the words into our lips.

2. Still more is this the case with the Our Father. It is the high privilege of this prayer that in it we use the very words of the Son of God. We may say that we pray through Him by Whom we live. He Himself to Whom we are bound to pray provides us in His goodness with the supplication. Besides this, it is in itself a most glorious prayer. It is clear, short and complete. It embraces perfectly the necessary elements of prayer, *i. e.*, invocation and petition. The invocation "Our Father" is not only true, it glorifies God and is necessary for us, because it at once reminds us of our true relation to God as Father, places us in a state of the utmost consolation, of reverence, love and confidence and recalls to us how we belong to the whole human race as to one great divine family. The petitions embrace all that we can reasonably and fittingly ask and give us the right order in which to offer them.

All the petitions we may make can be simply referred, both as to their end and means, to one great end, which is twofold in character. In reference to God, the end is

His honor and glory, in reference to us, our salvation by the attainment of heaven. Here we have the two first petitions, which have to do with that twofold end. The means to attain this end we find arranged as it were in two categories, the first embracing the petitions for all needful gifts both for the spiritual and bodily life (contained in the third and fourth petitions), and the second the petitions for the averting of evils which threaten or render impossible of attainment our final end. These are set forth in the three last petitions. We cannot think of or wish for more: all is included here. Thus the Our Father is a true type of prayer, full of great, sublime and noble ideas, thoughts and desires. It embraces our whole being, higher and lower, temporal and eternal. It is, as the Holy Fathers say, an abridgment of the Gospel and of all religion. It instructs our understanding, gives the right direction to our will, and so shapes all our desires, supplications, and prayers, that they conduce to our salvation. The Our Father is itself the pledge that our prayers will be heard, because we pray in Christ's words, and Christ, our Lord and High Priest, prays with us, whose impetration never fails, because of His

infinite and divine merit. No other prayer, indeed, unites us so closely with the Saviour's thoughts, purposes and intentions, with His spirit and His longing to advance God's glory and our salvation. The Our Father is the beautiful and eloquent expression of His all-embracing love for God, the Church and all mankind. He has comprised within it the needs of each individual soul, of all nations, of the whole human race and of all ages. The Our Father is, truly, the family prayer, the imperial supplication, of Christ and the Church.

3. The Hail Mary is the sweet share that Mary, our dear Lady, the Queen and Mother of Christendom, has in our vocal prayers. It is a proof that the Mother never fails the Church, that all is under her hand and that Christendom will not work, live, or die, without her.

The Hail Mary has indeed an exalted origin. An angel brought it in the name of God from heaven as a salutation of honor such as never yet had been given to a mortal, the Holy Ghost added to that salutation by the lips of the highly-favored St. Elizabeth, and the Church, in order to make the angelic greeting a complete prayer, has set her seal

thereto by the supplication she has subjoined. Since the sixteenth century, the prayer has been used in its present form. Almost always it comes after the Our Father to show the close and loving relation of the Christian soul to the Mother of God. It has become the chief and most loved expression of honor to Mary. It has been rightly called the "unending salutation," because incessantly as the earth circles round the sun it is renewed on earth and mounts to heaven.

Like all other prayers the Hail Mary consists of invocation and petition. The invocation contains five encomiums of God's Mother. The three first were uttered by the angel. They deal with the mystery of the Incarnation, of which Gabriel was the ambassador, and express first of all the fitting preparation of Mary for the mighty mystery by that fullness of grace which was vouchsafed her; then the accomplishment of the Incarnation by the special indwelling of God in Mary by her conception of the Eternal Son; and finally the effect of the mystery upon Mary, her honor and supremacy over all the blessed ones of her race. Elizabeth next proclaims, as the foundation and cause of this supremacy and this splendor of grace, the Divine Child

Whom Mary had conceived and was to bear. Lastly, the Church repeats and ratifies the whole glory of the marvelous titles bestowed on her by the angel and Elizabeth, by the ever-memorable formula of our faith "Mother of God." Thus the glorious invocation includes all that the Faith teaches us concerning Mary and so contains all Catholic doctrine with respect to her. The prayer, classically short, and wide in its scope, includes by its mention of those two moments—the present instant and that of our departure from this life—both our whole existence and our need of help, and vigorously expresses the conviction which Christendom cherishes of the all-embracing power of Mary's intercession and of the confidence which Christians place in her as the mediatrix of grace.

But the efficacy of the Hail Mary as a prayer is not exhausted thus. It develops through various combinations and amplifications into two great and important methods of prayer, namely, the Angelus at its three appointed hours each day, and the Rosary. Both devotions are nothing else but the Hail Mary, arranged on a certain plan with short additions which give a special application to the sense of the words in reference to

the mysteries of the life, suffering, and glorification of Jesus and Mary.

If, then, we understand the deep significance of the Hail Mary, and accustom ourselves to say it devoutly, we shall find it provides amply for our supplications, for our spiritual needs and for the glory of God's Mother. Every day of our life will then become an ever-blooming garden of roses, in which our dear Lady keeps eternal festival.

"But the perpetual, wearisome, and mortifying repetitions!" one hears people say. Whether they are wearying and mortifying depends entirely on ourselves. In itself the recitation of the holy Rosary is the frequent contemplation of a beloved picture and the repetition of a dear name, of a beautiful song that comes naturally to the lips and is anything but wearisome. The bird repeats its unvaried song the livelong day, and it is never tedious. The child repeats "Father" and "Mother," always the same beloved names that ever stir the parents' hearts with joy, because they come straight from the loving heart of their child. It all depends on our spirit and our love, and on a real devotional intention. And it is just this frequent repetition of the same thoughts and

truths with real attention that rouses our spirit and fosters our love.

4. The same may be said of the Credo and Glory be to the Father, in our vocal prayers, with the sign of the cross. There is a marvelous power and variety in the Catholic Church, even in her forms of prayer. As the dear God strews blossoms of a thousand kinds over this world, bidding them spring forth in manifold variety, so the Holy Ghost produces unceasingly forms of varying beauty in the Kingdom of Prayer. Christian, Catholic prayers hide such riches and such a fullness of truth as time can never exhaust. Without essential change, there will ever be variety. Thus the Glory be to the Father is but a development of the simple words with which we make the sign of the cross, and the Credo a more extended unfolding of the Gloria Patri and the sign of the cross. The Names of the Three Divine Persons, which are briefly and simply mentioned in the Gloria Patri and when we make the sacred sign, appear in the Credo by the mention of Their essential intrinsic relations; Their mode of procession One from Another, and Their activity with regard to creation, so that we have before us the whole scheme of Christian

doctrine, and, like a *Divina Commedia,* a stately presentment of Divine facts and supernatural mysteries.

5. Now let us briefly mention the prayers of the Church, or those forms of prayer which are publicly used by the Church in her worship and have received her approbation. It is certain that, next to those directly revealed, they must take the first place in our estimation and affection. The Church, which teaches us to believe aright, teaches us also how to pray aright. The law of her creed is also the law of her prayer. We shall nowhere find prayers more full of meaning and of power. They are full of the true Christian and Catholic spirit and flavor. Like the Psalms and the Lord's Prayer they are distinguished by clearness, simplicity, brevity and impetrative power. Where the Church prays, there the Holy Ghost, Who taught her how to pray, prays also. He who would learn the Church's motherly love and care for men, let him read the collects for the Sunday Masses, and the prayers appointed for the solemnities of Good Friday and Holy Saturday. There is no human condition, concern, or need, which has not the Church's loving thought and comprehension, her pity-

ing sympathy and intercession. All men are her children, she embraces all in her heart and in her prayer.

She sets before us a most fitting mode of praying in the Litanies, especially the Litanies of all the Saints. This method of prayer takes us back to the earliest times of the Church, when with supplication and entreaty she sought the tombs of the martyrs and her great basilicas. The structure of the Litanies of the Saints is perfectly adapted to responsory prayer. It places us at once in the midst of Christendom. All great and common affairs of the Church are named. Clergy and people join their voices and send up to heaven their united supplication. The members of the hierarchy point out what we are to pray for; the people with one voice take up the petition. The whole devotion brings to our mind the divine and hierarchical constitution of the Church. A wonderful Catholic tone, too, rings in the invocation of the Saints. There is in it true Catholic humility and recognition of the Communion of Saints and the law of intercession, first of all the intercession of our Lord and Saviour, the great, universal Intercessor, by the solemn invocation and the claiming of a share in the

merits and mysteries of His suffering and glorified Life—a glorious confession of true Christian faith. This method of prayer is full of instruction, simple, natural, utterly and wholly Catholic. It is a noble example of public prayer.

We may also mention the antiphons which the Church authorizes for use each day, at the varying seasons of her year, in honor of the Mother of God. They are blossoms of filial poetry, simple daisies on the field of the Church's year, but at times (as in the case of the Salve Regina) of marvelous depth of feeling and sublimity.

6. These are some of the jewels of the Church's treasury of vocal prayer. It is a great and noble treasury, the assured inheritance of all Christians, all praying souls. We have besides many other vocal prayers, which hold a lower place in our prayer-book list. The abundance has almost made us poor; with it there is always the danger of superficiality. It is certainly strange to be obliged to take a prayer-book and recite from it what we desire to bring to the feet of the dear God. If, nevertheless, we cannot do it otherwise, let us do it in this way. It is better to pray from a book than not to pray, or to pray badly.

But always let us try to use our old accustomed vocal prayers, those we learnt as children, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Creed, the Gloria. These should really form our prayer-book. All that is contained in printed books of devotion we find expressed in the great common forms much more simply, intelligibly and impressively. Only we must take the trouble to enter earnestly into these foundation-prayers, to learn their meaning thoroughly and to make it our own by a devout familiarity.

A very private and personal method of prayer is the use of ejaculations, or little prayers for divine protection. They consist in brief aspirations and acts of virtue which are sent up to the dear God all day long according to time and opportunity, fresh and living from the heart without special preparation. We can always find occasion for these upliftings of the heart: a sorrow that befalls us; a joy that is granted us; a benefit God bestows on us; a temptation that comes upon us; the recollection or renewal of good resolutions or of the amendment suggested by our particular examen of conscience; the passing of a church or picture of the saints; the meeting with those for whom we desire some good

or from whom we would avert some misfortune; lastly, the care to use spare moments of time which would otherwise be lost, of which there are plenty in our days, if we will only mark them and take care of them. To see to it quietly and little by little, that this uncultivated and fallow land of spare moments be ploughed and brought into cultivation is of the greatest importance to the lover of prayer. The right use of such moments is indeed but a retail spiritual business. But no prudent merchant despises the small daily customers; it is through them he becomes rich. He who despises little things is not worthy of great. Tiny grains of gold are gold none the less! This method of prayer, too, is not liable to distraction, under any circumstances. Before the distractions can arise, these winged prayers have long ago risen up to God and heaven. The intelligent use of these aspirations maintains us continually in the right disposition to pray. He who will only pray when he must, runs the risk of praying badly. These glowing sparks of prayer are like the host of little twinkling stars in the night sky, the adornment of our daily life, and our consolation in the darkness when we come to die.

CHAPTER IX

MENTAL PRAYER

Another method of prayer is interior or mental prayer. It is called interior because in its use one does not observe a set form of prayer nor any arranged sequence of words, and is known as mental prayer because it consists in a serious consideration of the truths of faith, with a view to their practical application, for without such application it would be but study in theology. Finally, it is indeed prayer, because this consideration is but the preparation that is to lead to prayer properly so called and to more ardent and fervent communion with God. Prayer is always converse with God; without Him as its end meditation would be but reflection and conversation with oneself.

2. It is of the first importance to guard against the idea that mental prayer is too high and hard for us and therefore unattainable by us. We have often meditated without knowing it. When we have reflected as to whether we should undertake some business and how we should accomplish it, this mental act was serious consideration, and if it had

been applied to the spiritual life, and accompanied with prayers, it would have been a real meditation.

3. Various directions for meditation are given. Some theologians give only one order of considerations, acts of virtue, and reflections, *e. g.,* adoration, humbling of oneself before the Divine Majesty, faith, hope, charity, etc., by which we hold communion with God. St. Ignatius teaches the practice of meditation by way of man's three spiritual powers. Memory, understanding and will are brought into play in order to place before us the consideration of some doctrine of the Faith or some mystery of the life of Jesus. Our memory supplies briefly the content of the special truth, or the course of the historical event, together with a slight picture of the scene by exercise of the imagination. The speculative intelligence seeks to master the content of the mystery, to comprehend its truth, sublimity, beauty and consolation, and the practical intelligence points out its application to our life. The affections at once arouse suitable acts of pleasure or aversion relative to what the understanding has discovered, and the will secures the lesson that has been gained, chiefly by earnest resolu-

tions and prayer for grace to carry them into practice. One makes first of all a short prayer of preparation for grace to meditate well, and one is ready to begin. The essence of this method of mental prayer consists, then, in a united action and application of the soul's faculties to a religious truth or a historical event. This event may be considered in various portions, which may again be subdivided according to "persons, words, and deeds," on all of which the spiritual faculties may be brought to bear. This method is simple, easy, almost suggested by our very nature, and solid. The whole man is exercised in it and strives with every faculty by God's help to become possessed of some divine truth and to apply it to his life practically and definitely. For beginners, these rules are unquestionably good. Little by little the practice of Mental Prayer grows into a habit, and its exercise and application continually become more easy.

St. Ignatius teaches besides three other methods of mental prayer.

The first consists in considering the historical mysteries as they present themselves in their various details to the interior and exterior senses, to our sight, our hearing, our affections and to our interior delight in the

virtues which are set before us in these mysteries. This is a very simple and easy method, which purifies and sanctifies our imagination, stimulates our will, and conducts our understanding into the innermost sanctuary of the Saviour's sentiments and virtues, and great saints have been accustomed to use it.

The second method is to consider the commandments, the duties of our state in life, our interior and exterior senses, and to see what our behavior is with regard to them all, arousing contrition and resolving to mend wherever we may be in fault. This is really a complete examination of conscience; but it can be turned into a meditation, if one reflects at each point what the commandment enjoins and forbids, and, with regard to our senses, for what purpose they are given to us, and how our Saviour and the saints have used them. This method of prayer greatly promotes purity of heart and is an excellent preparation for confession.

The third method takes a form of prayer for its basis. One goes through every word, and dwells so long in meditation upon each as it supplies us with thoughts and aspirations. This kind of mental prayer is of great serv-

ice in prolonged sacred functions, in weariness and weakness, and leads us to the knowledge of the construction, beauty and sublimity of our prayers. And this is a great help towards the right accomplishment of vocal prayer.

4. One can recommend nothing more earnestly, to those who have time and capacity for meditation, than the acquisition of this science of mental prayer. How often God exhorts us in Holy Scripture to meditate on His commandments and to consider His benefits! Our Saviour was continually, day and night, engaged in meditation, and He has commended the contemplative life as the "best part" by the example of His disciple, Mary of Bethany. By meditation, prayer becomes of necessity lengthened. The considerations which we engage in stir up our zeal and desire, and thus prayer gains a fervor which it would never otherwise possess. Thus, too, the effects of prayer, merit, satisfaction and impetrative power, are enhanced and increased. The great spiritual masters are agreed that mental prayer is a moral necessity for the attainment of perfection. It must then be especially fostered in religious houses, the houses, that is, of those

orders which lead a common and apostolic life, while they have intercourse with the world. Observance of the rule and the conscientious practice of mental prayer can even compensate for less strict enclosure and less external austerity. How, indeed, is it possible for one to become an apostle, a man of faith, unless he often and daily represents to himself the truths of our religion, earnestly considers and ponders over them, applies them to himself and makes them the principles of his conduct; unless by diligent prayer they sink down into his heart and so become as it were, the spiritual capital of his life? Without this capital one lives merely from hand to mouth, and never raises one's life to something higher and more rich in blessings. In vocal prayer, it is true, the memory, understanding and will, are exercised, but they are brought into play far more practically, intensely, and permanently in mental prayer. By means of it, year in year out, one who is truly virtuous, a true servant and man of God, must grow in his spiritual life. Therefore a great spiritual guide says that reading, vocal prayer, and listening to sermons are good and important at the beginning of that life. But meditation must be

our book, our prayer and our sermon, otherwise we shall be ever learning but never attain to wisdom. Want of earnest and intelligent attention to mental prayer is the reason why there are so few truly contemplative men among religious, priests and theologians.[1]

We should then firmly resolve to make, daily if possible, our meditation. For this purpose every spiritual reading, combined with reflection and prayer, can become a meditation. We must always prefer mental to vocal prayer. Even when at vocal prayer, if it has not to be concluded within a certain time, we may put aside the form, and follow a higher and more interior uplifting of our heart to God. The exercises of St. Ignatius form a true school of mental prayer. Their main business is meditation. There one learns to meditate, or learns again if one has lost this knowledge.

CHAPTER X

THE DEVOTIONS OF THE CHURCH

The use of the devotions of the church is of vast importance in the life of prayer.

1. These devotions are, in general, the

[1] Gerson, Lib. de myst. theolog. pract., consid. 11.

practice of the adoration due to God and belong essentially to the exercise of prayer and divine service. From this point of view there is nothing novel about them. What is new, is that at various times some new blossom from the ancient tree of faith shines out, as if struck by a sudden ray of light, and draws to itself the attention of the faithful, becomes an object of special spiritual attraction, of admiration and affection, and with the Church's consent becomes, through practical veneration, part of the public cultus of Christian people. The fact is old, the light is new. It comes forth from the Holy Ghost, whose divine function it is to lead the Church into all truth, to open up to her through these leadings, according to the needs of the age, new sources of help and consolation and to connect the activities of her life with ends which Divine Providence sets before her as the centuries roll on.

2. Prayer is the first and most natural work of the devotions of the Church, because such devotions belong to religion, of which prayer is the chief business. An invitation to prayer is, for the faithful, involved in them, and in proportion as they respond to it such a devotion will become a part of their

practical life and a means, in turn, of help in the exercise of prayer. One has only to consider for an instant the rich endowment of pious exercises, feasts and ceremonies which the Church's devotions have bestowed on us. If all devotions except Mass and Holy Communion, all the numerous observances in honor of Mary and the Saints, with their manifold ritual of festivals, prayers, and pious practices were abolished from the Church's life, how grievously the life of prayer would be diminished and injured, how desolate and poor would be the Church's year, of what a wealth of ornament and beauty our churches would be robbed! It is the devotions that continually stud the meadows of the Church with fresh blossoms of prayer and pious observance.

3. And with prayer come all the graces of prayer. By means of these devotions, through the prayers that are offered, the graces also that are contained in the mysteries of the Faith are drawn forth in more abundance and flow in mighty streams upon the Church. The blessing of prayer attendant upon a popular devotion is able to renew a whole period, to revive its energy and make it fruitful. Through the Saints, through the

religious orders, and through the great devotions, one may truly say that God renews the face of the earth.

4. These devotions effect an attraction towards prayer, and an uplifting of the life of prayer, that involuntarily recalls the words of Osee: "I will draw them with the cords of Adam."[1] By means of them the dear God comes forth from the door of heaven and enters the door of our poor souls. In them He adapts Himself to the character, the spiritual capacity and the idiosyncrasy of each individual and of the whole age. These peculiarities are as numerous as men themselves and as the various periods of the world. This is why the Holy Ghost inspires so many various and new devotions. Thus He aids and guides the Church in the work, so dear to her heart, of exploring the treasures of truth and wisdom that her Divine Bridegroom left to her as her dowry, of developing their disclosure in accordance with the capacity and need of her children and thus enhancing the charm of their beauty, their variety and their attractive power. Thus, side by side with the old established ways of God's prescribed worship, arise new

[1] Osee xi, 4.

forms, which adapt themselves to the seriousness and strength of the older forms and become suited to the peculiarity and taste of each individual. The devotions of the Church are like the great and noble feast of Assuerus.[1] Each finds what suits and attracts him. In this way the grace of prayer is vouchsafed to each soul in the manner that most pleases and attracts it. God and the Church follow us, as it were, in these devotions and adapt them to our taste. We are induced to declare our preference in spiritual things that we may be won to prayer, the great means of obtaining grace. Who can withstand God, when He, as it were, vouchsafes to accommodate Himself to our measure? One might say that the dear God wins countless recruits for prayer by these devotions. May His purpose be abundantly fulfilled in us! He gains nothing for Himself. He wills to win us to prayer, and by prayer to every good, to perfection, to heaven!

[1] Esther i, 3 seq.

CHAPTER XI

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

By "the spirit" of anything we understand its essence, its kernel, the noblest and strongest element in it, the soul and character, so to speak, without which it cannot be of any value. The spirit of prayer, then, is its activity, that which draws us to prayer and makes us constant in its exercise, renders our prayer effectual and helps towards its glorious end.

2. Now the spirit of prayer is composed of three elements.

The first is great esteem for prayer, a vivid realization of the sublimity and excellence of prayer in itself. We must be convinced that, by its very nature, prayer is the best and noblest activity of which we are capable. Prayer is converse and intercourse with God: that is the greatest thing we can say of it. We have, without doubt, in obedience to God's will, another all-important obligation, which is itself in some sense a kind of prayer and a service of God, that is, the fulfillment of the duties of our state. But there is a distinction. Whatever else we do

according to His will does not relate directly to Him, but to something external to Him, which yet has reference to Him and in some manner leads back again to Him. But prayer relates to Him immediately and is His personal service. It is the performance of the homage due to Him, and, the theological virtues excepted, the highest and most sublime virtue is the rendering of that homage. Even in the world, offices at court which involve personal service to the prince are held in the highest honor. And unquestionably, if we are to value prayer as we should, we must have a right idea of God. It is because He is not known as He should be that prayer is not esteemed, and is, alas! so often the very last thing thought of. One hears it said, that to pray is to do nothing, that prayer is good enough for children and women, for the unhappy and the aged. It has not come to that indeed with us; but frivolity and lack of supernatural earnestness and living faith are always in danger of making us undervalue prayer and subordinate it to other occupations that appeal merely to our liking, to our vanity, or to some other temporal advantage. We must regard and esteem prayer as God Himself

does, and, setting such value on it, must, so far as the duties of our state permit, prefer it to every other employment and sacrifice all to it. It is the personal service we pay to God, and on this account is a privileged employment. In this sense a theologian of high repute says that he would rather lose all his knowledge than deliberately omit one Hail Mary from his obligatory prayers.

The second necessary part of the spirit of prayer is the sensible conviction of the absolute need of prayer for the spiritual life, spiritual progress and our very soul's salvation. We do not value prayer as we ought, because we know God so little, and we do not pray because we are not penetrated with the sense of our want, our misery and our absolute need of prayer. What we must realize is that Prayer is for us an indispensable and unique means of grace and perfection, and this not only because of the Lord's positive command, but by the very nature of the case. Since the Lord and the Apostles, the Church and the holy Fathers so often and so earnestly admonish us to pray, it must be that prayer is by its very nature a divine law and belongs to the essential disposition of the supernatural order. The necessity of

grace and the command of God point inexorably to prayer. We must pray, then, if we would advance and not utterly fail. It is useless to say: "What will be will be, whether we pray or not." It is undeniable that much happens because one prays, and that much does not happen if one does not pray. "But I can't pray." Then you must learn. What one must do, one also can do. How much that is far harder than praying we have learnt in our life! "I have no faith, therefore I cannot pray." But you have the grace of prayer; pray for faith, and it will be given you. We learn to believe by prayer. The day we give up prayer we relapse into danger, sin and destruction. Life is a journey full of dangers and opportunities of evil, and men are usually, alas! on a par with their environment and no better. What a great grace, what a special protection it is to be constantly in a good environment, so that we are shielded from temptation and do not yield to the evil that is round about us. Those without this special protection fall from one danger into another, and so come to spiritual ruin. How are we to secure and retain this protection? By prayer. By

prayer we lay hold of the hand of God, and no one holding fast to that, as a child to its mother's, can come to the least harm or disaster. He who does not grasp this Divine hand must beware how he journeys. Prayer is, then, our indispensable aid, an aid within the reach of all. Without prayer nothing is possible to us, with prayer, all things.

The third element that constitutes the spirit, the strength of prayer is absolute confidence in prayer. With this we can do all things, obtain all things, because God has promised us all things. "Ask, and you shall receive." This confidence consists in a firm conviction that there is nothing we cannot accomplish and obtain by good and persevering prayer. Of course it must be prayer in conformity with the claims of reason and conscience. He who merely prays and at the same time seeks occasions of evil, not intending to guard himself from sin, makes a mock of prayer and only seeks a miracle. Rightly understood, it is true that all things are possible to prayer, even the hardest and most exalted of all, namely, the transformation of the heart and the attainment of perfection.

There is a golden saying about prayer in the catechism.[1] We read there that prayer makes us heavenly-minded and devout. Intercourse with the wise makes us wise, intercourse with God makes us like Him in our thoughts, principles, sentiments, speech and intentions. Little by little we grow into that likeness: it comes slowly, gradually, unobserved, but so much the more surely and enduringly. However worldly-minded we may be, little by little our thoughts change, our heart changes. What before was hard, bitter and contrary to our desires, becomes easy, sweet and desirable; the world that fascinated us loses all attraction, only God and eternity seem great and worthy of our longing. That is the decisive victory over the earthliness of our nature. That is the effect of persevering prayer and the grace that accompanies it. It is a school of sweetness, like that we knew as children at our mother's breast. There we were always learning much that was high and great, we learnt to think and speak, we became men and Christians, and all this without weariness and effort. Our mother was indeed full of loving-kindness, she brought herself

[1] I. e. in the *German* Parochial Catechism in general use.

down to us, became a child with us, lovingly explained all to us, raised us up to herself, so that we fell into her ways, learned to think and speak like her. So it is with prayer. By it God, Who created us, trains and educates us and forms us a second time to His sacred and divine likeness.

Prayer gives the same confidence also in our efforts on behalf of our fellow-creatures. Their salvation and perfection is the work of grace, not of nature. God is the Lord of grace, and the more intimately we are united with Him, the more we shall become channels and instruments of His grace. All that is external and natural is merely a sword; and what can the best weapon do without a human arm? What unites us to God is far more important and far stronger than what puts us in touch with men; and He can do great things with a weak instrument. But that which unites us to Him is the supernatural, is prayer. And He ordains prayer for the help of our neighbor as well as ourselves. We are to convert the world, not by work only, but by prayer as well. The one law of prayer applies to others as to ourselves. So has God ordained that in all He may be recognized and honored and that

we may not be puffed up by pride and ascribe what He does to ourselves. Prayer is indeed a far mightier instrument than preaching and all other means of helping others. We can pray always and everywhere, and the effect of prayer is far wider in its extent, far more universal in its scope. We can do but a little by word and writing. But prayer rises up to God and, fertilized by His blessing, descends as a rain of grace upon nations, countries, continents and centuries. The history of prayer is the history of the propagation of the Faith and the continual renewal of the Church. He who prays the best is at once the best missionary and the best citizen and patriot. We children of the twentieth century must especially take note of this. All around us are signs of work, very great, untiring, even exaggerated, but, alas! only external work. Only external and natural effort and achievement are esteemed and held at high value, only what makes a noise and a show in the world. Our age is a very beast of burden, whose one endeavor is to devour itself. And what is the end of it all? All vanishes, and we with it. It is godliness only that has the promises both of

time and eternity.[1] "Pray and labor," that is the one right, and Christian and lasting scheme of human life.

3. The spirit of prayer, then, includes high esteem for prayer, practical conviction of its necessity and confidence in its all-conquering power. This spirit of prayer is one of the most precious graces in the spiritual life, indeed, the chief of all graces, the beginning and the fulfillment of all good, the means of all means. So long as it lives within us we are grounded and rooted in God and in all that is good, and all within us can be restored and turned to good. Without it, our whole spiritual life is unreliable; there is no dependence to be placed upon us. Utterly miserable is our condition if we have wholly lost it; for then our life is no longer founded upon God, and must wither and perish. A great master of the spiritual life, St. Alphonsus de Liguori, wrote many useful books and, among others, a very little tract, of which he says in the fore-word that he considers it the most important and useful of all and that if all his other works were to perish, and this alone remained, he would be

[1] I Tim. iv, 8.

abundantly content and rewarded. It is his little book on prayer.

And so we have briefly put together here what belongs to the first fundamental principle of the spiritual life: the living conviction of the sublimity, necessity, efficacy and facility of prayer.

THE SECOND FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE: SELF-DENIAL

Prayer is necessary and is the beginning of all good. But only the beginning. It is necessary to join self-denial to prayer. This is the second of our three principles, which makes our spiritual life secure and joyful.

CHAPTER I

THE RIGHT VIEW OF MANKIND

Prayer orders and directs our thoughts towards God. Prayer is easy to him who knows God. Self-denial turns our attention to our own selves and teaches us how to deal with ourselves. But to do this rightly we must know ourselves and regard ourselves and our nature from the right standpoint.

There are three various ways in which we may regard mankind.

1. According to the first point of view, man is altogether good and perfect so far as his origin and nature are concerned. Deteriora-

tion is an after-consequence not of our own causing, but the result of intercourse with the corrupt world and its pernicious influence upon us. Man has therefore nothing to do but to preserve himself from such evil external influence. As for the rest, he may go his own way and let his character develop, just as his nature impels him.

This is the view of the so-called naturalistic school in its various manifestations. Such teachers deny the whole supernatural order and will have none of original sin and its sorrowful consequences to our race. This is frantic optimism. It refuses to see the palpable and tangible disorder and devastation now existing and sufficiently evident in mankind, and thus destroys the whole Christian Faith.

2. The second view asserts the exact contrary. Man was once created good, but original sin has so ruined his nature that there is now nothing good, but his being is totally evil. God Himself cannot make him interiorly good again, but must overlook his interior wickedness and clothe him externally with the justice of His Son, which man appropriates to himself by faith and confidence. In himself, even in heaven, he still remains

evil. So thought the reformers of the sixteenth century. The theory is a bottomless pessimism, one might even say a kind of Manicheeism that makes God Himself despair of being able to master the evil He has permitted. Such a method of justification is a contradiction according to which nothing is left to man but to despair of himself.

3. The third view teaches that God in the beginning created man good and upright, but that man, deceived by the serpent, fell, and by original sin and the loss of sanctifying grace not only failed of his supernatural end, but also became corrupt in his nature, if not essentially, yet perceptibly, through inordinate concupiscence. By Holy Baptism the state of grace is restored, man becomes interiorly good, just, and sanctified, there but remains in him the power of concupiscence and inordinate passions, which do not rob him of his free will, but necessitate a hard struggle and offer continual occasions of sin. He can be victorious in this conflict through the grace of Christ and his own co-operation, by using the means of grace provided in the Church, by prayer and self-denial.

That is the Christian and Catholic view of

mankind, and it alone is true and right. It does justice both to God and man, at once humbles and uplifts us, warns and encourages us and gives us hope. According to it all falls into its right place. God is acknowledged as the Author and Finisher of our justification, while man has the honor and merit of co-operating with God in his salvation. There is no exaggeration in either direction. It is the most temperate pessimism and the most reasonable and noble optimism. Therefore it is of the highest importance that all our personal activities should bear the impress of self-denial.

CHAPTER II

WHAT SELF-DENIAL IS

Self-denial is also called mortification. This is why it is such a bugbear to men. Now nothing is worse than a blind terror, and nothing more completely removes it than the discovery that the object and cause of fear exist only in our imagination. Such is the case with self-denial or mortification. To see what it really is suffices to reconcile us to it.

1. What, then, is self-denial? It is nothing more than the moral force and strength we must apply in order to live according to reason, conscience and faith, the power we need in order to fulfill our duty and to be in fact what we ought and desire to be, reasonable and noble-minded men. That such force should be necessary is a consequence of Adam's fall and is a reminder that we still bear the trace of original sin. Once all was easy and delightful; that is so no more. This force which we must exert gives various names to the same thing: self-discipline, self-mastery, self-denial, mortification, self-hatred. These all mean the same thing, and all fitly express, according to the teaching of Holy Scripture, the toil and effort that self-denial costs us. They awaken the thought of conflict, of withdrawal and refusal—a thought our nature inevitably shrinks from. The difficulty arises not from the thing itself, which we cannot but desire and value, but from ourselves, from our nature, now weak and troublesome, and which must be made better.

2. What is really the object of our resistance? What must we attack and subdue? In the first place not our nature. We did

not create it; it belongs to God, not to us. We can use it, but dare not abuse it. The faculties of that nature are not, then, the object of mortification. We need those faculties, and cannot live and act without them. The stronger and more perfect they are, the better. Therefore it is not our passions, even, *in themselves,* that we have to fight; they are part of the household furniture of our nature and are in themselves good or at least indifferent and only become evil through misuse.

Not these, but the inordinate indulgence of them, is the proper object of our mortification. But what is inordinate indulgence? All that is contrary to our end and makes us fail of that end; all that exposes us to the danger of losing it, all that does not further it, in particular, whatever is sinful, whatever is an occasion of danger needlessly encountered and encouraged, whatever is useless, or for which we have no sufficient motive, and whatever is inconsistent with our reason, our conscience and our faith. These and these only are the object of mortification, and must be fought against and done to death if we desire to lead a reasonable and a pure life.

3. The proper end of mortification is now clear. That end is not to hinder and stifle, to spoil and destroy nature, but to help it against the enemy, to guard, guide, direct, educate, improve it, to make it strong, ready, disposed to and persevering in all that is good, to restore it so far as possible to the purity, justice and holiness of its first condition, to make it prompt and capable in the full use of its faculties for God's service and for the help and salvation of men.

The constraint and violence to oneself and the sense of uneasiness that accompany mortification are, then, not ends and can accomplish nothing in themselves. Man is born, both in soul and body, for happiness, not for sorrow. This was his original condition, and it is only in consequence of sin that it is otherwise to-day. Sorrow is only an accompaniment, not a goal, but a state of transition to glorious conquest and peace. Even the pain grows less little by little, and that in proportion as we set about the work of self-denial with decision and courage and persevere in its exercise.

4. Still more light is thrown upon the nature and importance of self-denial when we consider the place it holds in the building up

of a virtuous character, and of what virtue it is a part. Strictly, it belongs to no individual and particular virtue. It is necessary wherever force and power must be exerted. It is allied more especially with temperance and fortitude when inordinate passion must be extinguished and restrained, or when some difficult undertaking demands decision, courage, and perseverance.

This, then, and nothing else, is self-denial or mortification; it is the simplest and most natural course under given circumstances. It demands no more than what we must be and indeed desire to be—no more than the trouble we must take to become reasonable, chaste, noble men and good Christians. As St. Ignatius says briefly and truly in the Exercises, the function of mortification is so to train us that no passion is allowed to guide our actions. To represent it as more than this is imagination and takes away the good name of mortification. A great part of the dread of self-denial arises from an untrue and perverse representation of it. It is conceived as the lion in the way,[1] the bugbear and instrument of torture that robs our noble, God-created nature of its rights and

[1] Proverbs xxvi, 13.

would torment it to death. Nothing of all this is true. So important is it to have correct conceptions: they quickly resolve our difficulties.

CHAPTER III

WHY WE MUST MORTIFY OURSELVES

The motives inducing us to practise mortification are as many as the days of the year, and more.

1. First of all we must firmly hold fast the truth that we are in a fallen condition, *i. e.*, a state of disorder and deterioration. We are only too sensible of it. Our whole nature is like a knotted trunk, distorted throughout by frivolous, dangerous and often unchaste inclinations and impulses, which make good difficult to us, urge us to what is evil and dispose us to sin. We are full of selfishness, pride, envy, cowardice, impatience, sensuality, indolence and instability. The most cultured man can become grievously mean and ignoble, if he refuses to do violence to himself. If we give our evil passions free play, we may be led into some incredible wicked-

ness. One keeps dangerous beasts behind bolts and bars, and even when tamed one does not absolutely trust them. And such a beast truly dwells within us. There is nothing so mean and low that a man is not capable of it, if he be impelled by unbridled passions. The only help against this is the grace of God and the power of self-denial.

2. We are men and live amongst men in this world, which, while it certainly is no hell, is also no heaven. Life is a journey, but not a pleasure trip; it involves earnest struggle and work, and work makes one tired. It is military service that cannot be evaded, a warfare between life and death, an interlacing of sorrow and joy, happiness and misfortune, the one raising us to presumption, the other depressing us to despondency and despair. Life is companionship with many others, to whom we are bound by a network of various relationships, social obligations, positions and vocations, and every such vocation and position demands some kind of sacrifice. Who can rightly discharge his obligations without self-discipline and self-denial, without boundless patience? We have to exercise patience on all sides—with ourselves, with our neighbors, with God Him-

self. But patience is impossible without self-denial.

3. We are Christians, and everything in the Christian religion obliges us to mortification. Our Saviour, the Founder of our religion, preached mortification both by word and example. He is its living model in all the mysteries of His life from His cradle to His cross. He makes it the indispensable condition of following Him and being His disciple,[1] the very token and symbol of His religion. The Christian Faith is a cross to our pride of intellect and the armory of all motives for self-denial. The commandments are so many objects of, and demands upon, mortification, and even the sacraments signify to us its importance and effect it within us by the graces they convey. The whole Christian life is, according to St. Paul's comprehension of it, a death and burial with Christ.[2] Without this essential mortification, which enables us to avoid all serious sins, to keep all God's commandments and to resist all temptations, our whole Christianity is vain and worth nothing. Only by the strait way and narrow gate of self-denial can we enter into heaven.[3] Deliberate rejec-

[1] St. Matth. xvi, 24.
[2] Rom. vi, 4; Col. iii, 3.
[3] St. Matth. vii, 14.

tion of it is the declaration of war against God on the part of the natural man, and a denial of Christianity and the Christian view of the world.

4. We must possess more virtues; through them only can we reach our end. The steps to that end are good deeds, and in order to do these we must have the requisite powers. These powers are the virtues, which are nothing else than constant powers and capabilities to act rightly. We have need, more or less, of all the virtues, and the exercise of them all is more or less difficult. Here comes in the aid of self-denial and self-discipline. As we have seen, it is not a single virtue, but helps us to all. Every virtue in itself is beautiful, desirable and attractive. What holds us back and frightens us is the difficulty of acquiring and exercising it. Now self-denial removes the difficulty. He who has learnt to discipline himself possesses the key to all the virtues. In this consists the immense importance of mortification in the life of virtue.

5. The same is true of merit, without which we cannot gain heaven. Now self-denial is the most sure method of gaining merit, because it opposes our natural feelings and

cannot possibly be an illusion, and it is also the most meritorious because the most difficult of all works and makes possible the exercise of the most exalted virtues. How eagerly we would seek for every sacrifice and every little act of self-denial if eternity were upon us and the merit of our actions were about to be decided! And how many such acts, great and small, we could perform each day with a little care!

6. If this be so, then without doubt the best spiritual teacher is he who urges us to self-denial, the best book, that which brings before us the practice of mortification. "The greater violence thou offerest thyself, the greater progress thou wilt make," says old Thomas of Kempen. This is certain, that true and unerring spirituality is to cleanse one's heart from sin, to perform virtuous acts and thus to uproot inordinate passions. All this one can do by self-denial, and by it only. Mortification is the touchstone of a true Christian life.

7. Lastly, we desire to be, and must be, men of our own time, modern, practical men. This means, rightly understood, that we must live in our own time and appropriate and develop in ourselves all that is good

in its point of view and its efforts. There is nothing in this displeasing to God. On the contrary, such ideals and interests are always guide-posts by which He conducts mankind and each age along the way that leads to the end He has appointed. To-day there is much talk and ado about education, culture, progress and civilization in general, and in particular about the development of individuality, personality and character. And rightly so. For of what use is all external progress, all science, all art and government, if the individual remains uneducated, barbarous and worthless, a moral beggar and wretched slave of the most disgraceful passions in the midst of the earthly splendor he has produced? As the Prophet says: "Their land is filled with silver and gold: and there is no end of their treasures . . . and man hath bowed himself down, and man hath been debased."[1] But of what does the cultivation of character, personality and individuality consist, except in the training, development and strengthening of the will in the direction of all that is good, noble and praiseworthy? And how is this education to be attained and won? By noth-

[1] Isaias ii, 7, 9.

ing if not by self-denial. Self-denial is the test of the strength of our will; the will must pass through this school if it is to become an instrument for good.

8. When this schooling is accomplished, man is restored to the honor and glory in which he was originally created by God. Every act of self-denial and self-mastery brings him back nearer to the divine prototype. Then he becomes what God intends him to be, an image of his Creator, a sanctuary of justice, wisdom, order, beauty, freedom and true faith. But all this is secured only at the cost of self-denial.

CHAPTER IV

CHARACTERISTICS OF SELF-DENIAL

The end of self-denial is a glorious one. But not every kind, but only the right kind of self-denial attains it. To be the right kind, it must possess the following characteristics:

1. In the first place, it must be constant. There are men who are willing to deny themselves occasionally, casually, once in a while, because they cannot help themselves and can-

not evade it without disadvantage. That is not enough. We must practise self-denial regularly, from principle, interiorly and as the business of life. We must be resolved to wrestle with ourselves, not to let ourselves go, to be stern with ourselves, otherwise we cannot prevail over our disordered passions, over the evil that is in us and that ever threatens and lies in wait for us. We cannot overlook the fact that such evil is not with us merely occasionally and casually. It is, alas! a heritage of our nature, which we bring into the world with us and which follows us all our life long. Evil is a law within us, St. Paul says,[1] a perpetual, rooted habit and a firmly established power. Now habit can only be overcome by habit, a law can only be displaced by another law, power by another power of equal strength. He who will be secure, then, must take this for his motto: you must overcome yourself, you must do violence to yourself, or evil will be your master.

2. The effort to subdue self must, in the second place, be comprehensive, extending to every department of our life. Self-denial can leave nothing neglected, but must include

[1] Rom. vii, 23.

all, body and soul, every individual faculty, the understanding, will and passions. Every passion we tolerate is an enemy in our rear that may seize us and cause us to fall. Who would have thought that avarice would have made a traitor and a suicide of an apostle? Every such passion is an evil spirit that may strangle us.

3. Thirdly, this effort must be continuous and unbroken, While we pause in our campaign, evil is continually at work within us. Like a tape-worm it constantly renews itself, like weeds in a garden it grows unceasingly. Therefore we must have the hoe ever at hand. It is hard to subdue self and to counteract this evil growth; and this difficulty can only disappear through use and habit. A heavy wagon on the road goes with sufficient ease as long as it is kept going; but how many shouts and cracks of the whip are necessary if it has to be started again after a long delay! So is it with self-denial. After each long neglect the difficulty begins afresh. And so one goes on being afraid and hesitating all one's life.

4. The last characteristic is that self-denial must not only be a matter of defense, but must always advance to the attack and

command a position of offense. That is a leading principle in the warfare of this world and not less so in spiritual combat. We must not wait until we are attacked, but must take the initiative in the assault. Otherwise it may happen that we are surprised and find it too late to oppose the enemy. It is always easier to attack than to defend. In the one case we make our own terms to our own advantage, in the other we are the sufferers to our loss. If you wish for peace, be prepared for war. These are the tactics urged by St. Ignatius on his disciples in the Exercises: not to be content with what is necessary merely, but to advance beyond this. If we are tempted to exceed in our food or to shorten our appointed time of prayer, let us straightway take a little less of the one and give a little more time to the other. That is to be a true soldier in Christ's Kingdom. Thus we become terrible to our wicked enemy.

These are the characteristics of true self-denial. This is the armory of the mighty men of Israel. With it—and only with it—we are a match for every enemy.

CHAPTER V

SOME CONSIDERATIONS

There is no denying that true mortification is no easy business. In that it is like every serious, great and holy undertaking. How otherwise could its results be so grand and so beautiful? In this world nothing is to be had for nothing; and what costs nothing is worth nothing. Therefore, it is no wonder that various perplexities and objections present themselves. That has always been the case and belongs to the very nature of the undertaking.

1. The first thought may well be, how is it possible to lead, and persevere in, a life of mortification? The law of self-denial is laid down by our Divine Saviour, and that for all men. It is the simple consequence of the fall: there could be no other. We must accept the fact. The alternative is either to overcome ourselves or to fall away. Self-denial is, moreover, demanded by our reason and admitted to be necessary by all serious and sensible men. The characteristics enumerated in the last chapter follow inevitably from its very scope, since without them

its end cannot be attained. Now what God commands, what all reasonable men recognize as right, what reason not only approves but demands, must certainly be possible and attainable. As a matter of fact, countless souls have attained and are attaining it. Why then should not we? Help and means are ready to our hand; we have to do nothing alone. St. Paul ends his lament over our manifold inward misery, not with a cry of despair, but an exclamation of joyful hope and conscious triumph: "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord." [1] We have grace, we have prayer, we have the inexhaustible pliability and power of endurance of the human will, we have the grand assurance of victory in God and through God.

2. "But is not this practice of mortification dangerous and injurious to the health?" It can be, under certain circumstances, if not exercised with prudence. It is imprudent, first, if a man does not keep in mind the motive of self-denial, but proceeds blindly. That motive is, not to injure, but to help nature. As soon as real injury appears, care

[1] Rom. vii, 24, 25.

must be taken. A trifling and passing inconvenience is no injury and no danger. It is imprudent again, if we do not clearly distinguish the object of mortification, *i. e.*, what is sinful, dangerous and useless—not nature itself, nor what is good and temperate. It is the former, not the latter, that must be guarded against and removed. Thirdly, it would be imprudent to wish to force everything at once. So long as God gives us time, we must allow ourselves time also. Nature and grace work slowly; only let us *be* at work constantly. Finally, it is imprudent to proceed merely according to one's own judgment, without guidance and counsel. Let us leave the how, when and how much to the judgment of an experienced spiritual guide. Let us act according to these hints, and mortification will do us no harm. Far more dangerous and hurtful is it *not* to mortify ourselves. Many more men injure themselves and die through too little than through too much self-renunciation and mortification, and with far less honor.

"But it is and remains hard." Let us not forget that it is no less hard to neglect mortification and to give the reins to our passions. Enjoyment is short, repentance long.

And the difficulty, too, becomes ever less with practice. Interior satisfaction, peace and consolation render the trouble and distaste but trifling. Mortification remains hard, indeed, to the end, if it is not always practised on principle and with perseverance. We are truly soul-sick, and if we would be well, we must submit to the cure. "I will!" How much that is hard has that word overcome, how much that is great and beautiful has it accomplished! *Will* then, only *will,* and all is well.

CHAPTER VI

EXTERIOR MORTIFICATION

1. Exterior mortification consists in the use of the moral power to restrain and employ the outward senses and faculties of the body in due order and discipline, according to the demands of reason and conscience.

2. The object of exterior mortification is, in general, to guard the senses from going astray and from all inordinate activity, and to make them disposed to and constant in all that is good. In other words, we must withdraw the senses from all dangerous occasions, must forbid ourselves all that flatters

sensuality, that has no reason but mere enjoyment, and accustom our body to bear what is disagreeable and contrary to its desires.

We must restrain the eyes from curiosity and not allow ourselves to see and to read everything, particularly what may be the occasion of danger to our senses; the ears from mere inquisitiveness and useless conversation; the palate from seeking luxurious dainties. We must be content with everything, not complain of our food and not exceed in the amount we take. The greatest restraint should be observed with regard to drink. Our senses must be accustomed to earnest work, to moderation in sleep, to hardness, to the bearing of fatigue, cold and heat. A very general, safe and yet helpful means of self-denial is watchfulness as to our behavior, that it correspond with our position and our circumstances.

3. As to the mode of practising exterior mortification, prudence and a wise moderation are especially necessary. The end of mortification, not to injure but to support nature, is always the determining factor. An important rule is, not to continue long in the practice of the same form of mortification, but to change from time to time. A single

form of abstinence generally does no harm. A manner of life that helps people, especially young people, to maintain good health, is always to be recommended and followed. "Little but steady" was the rule recommended by a saint with regard to these mortifications.

4. The chief motive for practising exterior mortification lies in the present moral condition of our bodily nature. From a Christian point of view, the body, since the fall, has been a power for sin and evil. Holy Scripture calls it simply "The body of sin," [1] "the law of sin," [2] "the flesh that lusteth against the Spirit." [3] Therefore, St. Paul chastised his body,[4] and he cites this mortification as a true test of his apostolic mission. This chastisement of the body is altogether a Christian idea. The concupiscence that tends to sin resides indeed only in the soul. But soul and body mutually interpenetrate and form one being. Because of this intimate union it comes to pass that what happens in the senses forthwith passes into the soul and leads to sin by consent on the soul's part. Who does not know what tumult and what mischief may arise from an unguarded

[1] Rom. vi, 6.
[2] Rom. vii, 23.
[3] Gal. v, 17.
[4] I Cor. ix, 27.

look? Most temptations arise in the soul through the senses. To hold the senses in check is, then, to be beforehand with temptations and to deprive evil of its power. But the purpose of exterior mortification is not only to rid the body of inordinate passion and the allurement of sensual impressions, but also of repugnance and hesitancy with regard to what is good, of timidity, sloth, and affection, and to endow it, on the other hand, with ease, agility, cheerfulness and perseverance in the performance of all good. To attain this there is no better means than to mortify the senses and the flesh.

Even the soul profits by bodily mortification. Chief of all it gains humility. The honorable treatment it has to bestow on the body, continually reminds the spirit of its own weakness and liability to sin, and so delivers it from pride, the root of all sin, and makes it careful and humble in avoiding danger. The spirit furthermore gains strength over the flesh, zeal, courage, energy, joy, and especially ease in prayer. By the exercise of exterior penance, which consists in nothing else but bodily mortification, the spirit renews her youth like the eagle and acquires power for fresh flights from the dull

earth below to the heights of the eternal home.

5. Finally, the saints, each and all, even the gentlest, kindest, and most lovable, preach exterior mortification to us; and in doing so they are but the living interpreters of our Lord's life and example. And they went as far in exterior severity as their position and circumstances permitted. Certainly the love of bodily mortification lies deep in the spirit of Christianity. He who thinks lightly of it and casts it aside will never become a spiritual man.

CHAPTER VII

INTERIOR MORTIFICATION

1. Interior self-denial, as contrasted with exterior, is concerned with the training and ordering of the interior powers of the soul, to preserve them from evil, confirm them in good and make them capable of performing it.

By these interior faculties we mean the understanding, the will, the imagination and the sensuous appetitive faculty.

2. The significance and importance of in-

terior mortification are evident when we compare it with exterior self-denial. This latter is but a means, a condition and a fruit of the former. The interior is at once the end and the source of the exterior. All the moral value of exterior mortification comes from interior mortification. Without the latter, indeed, the former has no real meaning, and is but the observance of the fakirs, or the sort of training one can give to beasts. Under certain conditions the exterior mortification may even be supplied by interior, by solitude, recollection of spirit and detachment of heart. Finally, exterior mortification can only be practised under limitations of place, time, and circumstances; but interior can and must be employed everywhere, always, and without any limitations.

Secondly, the importance of interior mortification is evident from the relation it bears to morality and the general effort towards a virtuous life. Moral order and disorder, sin and merit, depend upon and proceed from our inferior spiritual nature. In that, in our understanding and our free will, lies the whole moral content of life and the responsibility of our deeds. What our outward nature adds is not of their essence. In

the heart sin is committed, as our Saviour tells us: "From the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man. For that which proceeds from the mouth comes forth from the heart." [1]

Interior mortification possesses in general all the true conditions and signs of solid virtue. That is solid, in the first place, which proceeds from a true and solid principle, not from passion, selfishness and mere impulse, but from God Himself, from a supernatural motive and a loyal will; that is solid, too, which costs us something and is difficult to us; to do such an act is contrary to our fallen nature and a sure sign that we do not seek ourselves; that is solid, finally, which helps our progress, *i. e.,* which removes the hindrances we oppose to God's gifts of grace. All these conditions of true, solid virtue are to be found only in interior mortification. On this account it is always considered and set forth by all spiritual teachers and saints as the unfailing test of virtue, of perfection and sanctity. Thus the infallible Teacher of sanctity, the Divine Saviour, regarded virtue,

[1] St. Matth. xv, 19, 20, 18.

and by this standard He judged it. The Pharisees, those men of the later Judaism that made such claim to virtue, were to Him, in spite of their exterior sanctity, mere covered and whited sepulchres full of filthiness and corruption.[1]

3. If we ask, then, how, in particular, we are to mortify ourselves, the answer is: first, in that which concerns our calling in life, in whatever hinders us from fulfilling it perfectly; secondly, in what we chiefly need in view of our own particular difficulties and natural defects, whether interior or exterior; and thirdly, in whatever God wills and commands us to do.

CHAPTER VIII

MORTIFICATION OF THE INTELLECT

We can now enter on the consideration of a special faculty, which can and must be the object of mortification.

1. When we speak of the intellect, the object of mortification can only be something defective or inordinate of which we are guilty—something excessive or defective in

[1] St. Matth. xxiii, 27.

the cultivation or the use of the intellectual faculty.

2. The understanding is the faculty of apprehending truth; and truth is gained by the reception of knowledge. In the acquisition of knowledge the cultivation of the intellect consists, and care for such cultivation is our first and most necessary duty, because the intellect is the distinctive and principal faculty of man and, in a true sense, is most needed for his life's welfare. None can make use of an ignorant mind, neither God, nor the world, nor the devil.

3. Now, the acquisition of knowledge may, first of all, be neglected. The knowledge we have to acquire must be certain, plain, sufficient and comprehensive for our state in life. Frivolity, superficiality and intellectual sloth must be overcome. Among those things that we have to know we must reckon as most important the knowledge of religious truths, those high and eternal truths which reveal to us the great relations between ourselves and the world about us, between the world and God and eternity, and which give us a true and a Christian view of the world. Without question this is the highest knowledge the human understanding can acquire,

and it is bound to acquire it. Without this, all other knowledge lacks both foundation and coherency. From it Christian principles of life and of moral conduct must be acquired. Without them man has no interior support. But these principles we find in the Faith, which must therefore be earnestly learnt and carried into practice.

4. But it is also possible to exceed in learning and study. The inordinate lust for knowledge, learning merely for learning's sake, intellectual curiosity and the mania to know everything without distinction and purpose, what is needless, useless, or dangerous as well as what is too high and unattainable by us, out of mere ambition and vanity—all this must be overcome.

Old writers, therefore, distinguish as a separate virtue what they call *studiositas,* which opposes and moderates this inordinate desire; and rightly so. Many harmful consequences result from this fault, but the chief of them are a false intellectual balance and, since the passion for knowledge is often stronger than the capacity, either perverse and wrong ideas and views, or a fatal superficiality, inconstancy and utter dissipation. Nothing claims our whole nature so come-

pletely as inquiry and study; and as a consequence of inordinate indulgence of this desire an inconsolable desolation seizes on the heart, with an incapacity for prayer, not to speak of that continual weakness of the will which characterizes so many scholars to their disadvantage.

We must discriminate with regard to knowledge as with bodily nourishment. Too much food overburdens the stomach, too much knowledge puffs up the mind. Knowledge is not the highest good; truth stands higher. Without truth, knowledge is mere deceit and falsehood. Therefore, study and inquiry must follow a certain order: we must learn first what is necessary, then what is useful, then what is pleasant.

5. Let us, finally, beware of hardness and inflexibility in our views and judgments. A pious state of mind cannot exist side by side with hardness. Piety is always united to simplicity, kindness and humility, and none of these are to be found in obstinacy of judgment. On the contrary, it leads to strife, and makes us unloving and unloved. Intellectual hardness is a kind of fanaticism, and does not make for truth; one is best out of the way of fanatics.

Intellectual obstinacy is the enemy of all truth and knowledge. There has never been a heresy but took its rise from this madness of private judgment. It does not pause even before God and the Church. Thus it rejects not only speculative truth but moral truth as well, and often even the practical knowledge and prudence with regard to life that resides in the intellect. There is nothing more unpractical in real life than imprudence, and there is nothing more imprudent than willfulness and obstinacy in one's own opinion. We do not really believe that we possess all wisdom and have found the ultimate answer to all questions. What we do not know is infinitely more than what we do. To think for ourselves is good, but it is also good and often better to listen and accept what others say. Independence is good, too, but not in opposition to the truth. Knowledge of self is the best remedy against stubbornness, for it makes us humble and wise. The wisest men are always the humblest.

CHAPTER IX

MORTIFICATION OF THE WILL

1. The mortification, or training, of the will is of the highest importance, and that for three reasons.

First, the will is one of man's most glorious faculties. Truth and goodness are his life. With the understanding he comprehends what is true, with the will he seizes upon what is good. In a true sense the will is, indeed, his highest faculty. By itself, it is blind; the understanding must show and hold forth what is good before it, in order that it may strive after it. The will usually follows, but not always. The understanding is under the necessity of accepting the truth, but the will need not turn to the only good. It is free, and because it is and must be so, neither man nor even God can force it. Because of this freedom and spontaneity the will is so important and so sublime that it is a true image of the freedom of God. Good and evil, man's whole moral life, hangs upon the will and is determined by it. On this account it is the apple of discord between God

and our wicked enemy. Man's happiness and misery are decided by his own will.

In the second place, the will is in extreme need of training and must therefore be subjected to severe discipline. Left to itself it is utterly infirm and unstable in its purposes. In consequence of original sin it has become still weaker and more feeble. It was the will to which original sin gave the most grievous blow, and ever since it has been drawn on the one side by interior concupiscence, on the other by exterior temptation. On these slender threads hangs the power of the will, and therefore man's salvation. This very frailty is the reason why God has provided incomparably more interior helps to virtue for man's will than for his understanding.

Thirdly, the human will is capable of being trained and in the highest degree responsive to wise discipline and education, while the capacity for such discipline is far more evident and brings far greater results in the case of the will than in that of the understanding. Man can subject his will, but not his understanding. On every side he finds limits to his intellectual power, but with God's

grace his will can do all things. We see this in the saints: it is their good *will* that the Church has canonized.

2. Now the discipline of mortification has to set the will free from three special defects and faults.

The first is injustice and unchastity. Justice, sincerity, and purity of the will consist in subjection and obedience to reason and conscience in all that they prescribe as good and necessary; impurity and dishonor consist in resistance to and rebellion against what is known to be good and needful. This is the worst sin that the will can be guilty of. It must conform to reason and conscience, and this is no slight upon its royal dignity, for in itself the will is blind and must obey if it is not to stumble and fall. Ultimately its submission is to God Himself, to the supreme rule of goodness which He has revealed through our reason and conscience. In order that this purity of will may be complete, we must do and undertake nothing without reason and perform all the good that corresponds to its demands.

The second fault is stiffness and stubbornness, irresolution, inclination to delay what we know to be our duty. We must, certainly,

consider first, but then we must act, and that with energy and courage and without delay. It is possible to be too late and to pay too dear, for heaven and hell may be at stake.

Weakness of the will, lack of enduring and persevering power, is the third fault. It is very often the result of some attachment to an earthly good. But such attachment is always a bondage and brings us no honor, because it fetters the freedom of our motives and our conduct, degrades us, and makes us petty, cowardly, and pitiable. Nothing helps us in this but to disengage ourselves forcibly from what hinders us. Thus only our heart can be free and regain its strength and peace. This weakness of the will may arise from fickleness, from lack of perseverance in the face of difficulties, or from fear of undertaking what is high and hard for us. Let us remember that a will without power is useless for this world, where there is always a cross to carry and contradiction to endure. Are our resolutions to last only during fine weather? A will without power to resist is really no will at all. With such a will we are good for nothing but a weather-cock.

3. The best means to train the will is prayer. Prayer in itself is a school of

patience, that is, prayer at the appointed times under all circumstances. Besides, by prayer comes grace, without which we cannot restrain our stubborn will and set it free from its changeableness and inconstancy.

Plain and firm principles and resolutions form another means. If we fail in accomplishment and perseverance in spite of these, what should we be without them? A definite rule of life and arrangement of the day serve the same end. Such a rule is for those living in the world what the Rule of their Order is for Religious. We must observe this rule constantly, or quickly resume it if it has suffered any disturbance.

The temptations that come upon us are also an excellent occasion for strengthening the will. They are conflicts that develop our courage and our determination. They come so frequently and from so many directions that we cannot but become established in virtue and strength of character if we bravely defend ourselves against them.

An excellent means, finally, of training the will, is to discipline ourselves in the many small, indifferent things that present themselves during the day. These things are little in themselves, trifling and indifferent, but

they occur often, and every time the will gains more power. The thing is small, the effect great.

4. Particular, deliberate, and systematic training and formation of the will is the more necessary and important now-a-days, when undue exaggerated attention is bestowed upon the intellect, while the *will* is neglected and like a wild bush on an open heath stands exposed to every storm. Later on, when stricken on every side by its unrestrained passions, and left desolate, it becomes like a poor criminal haled to punishment. No one has taken the trouble to train it. One cannot repeat too often: sufficient attention is not given to the express, fundamental and thorough training and strengthening of the will. We soon learn enough to be good, useful men. If we had bestowed half as much trouble and attention on the training of our will, we should have become saints long ago.

CHAPTER X

OF THE PASSIONS

For the coherence and better understanding of what follows, a few words on our passions are needed here.

1. The passions (not in the sense of evil, inordinate desires, but as natural facts in our spiritual life) are emotions of the sensuous faculty or lower will corresponding to the natural pleasure or displeasure presented to the soul by the senses, the imagination and, in general, by any sensuous emotion. These emotions are, in relation to what is pleasant, an eager desire; in relation to what is disagreeable, dislike and aversion. There are, therefore, two fundamental passions, love and hate, with their subordinate passions: on the one hand desire, hope, courage, and joy, on the other aversion, melancholy, fear and despair.

2. The passions have their root in our nature, which is at once spiritual and physical, and serve to the maintenance and well-being of the individual by helping him to strive strenuously and easily after the good that corresponds to his nature and to turn away from evil.

The sensuous emotions that precede any exercise of the conscience or the higher will are indifferent and without moral value, but after the will has decided concerning them, they can become occasions and instruments of virtue or of sin, and thus be good or bad.

In consequence of the fall, the passions are stirred and make their demands without prescience and permission of the higher will. They even continue in spite of our reason and higher will resisting their desires, and thus cause disorder, dissension, and unrest within us, and they can become occasions of temptation and even of sin if the higher will consents and submits to them. But it is always in the power of the will to decide freely whether to consent or refuse.

But the passions also bring us benefits and work our good; they are indeed great helps towards good. They give facility and perseverance, impel us to heroic virtue and acquire for us great merit, if they are under the active guidance of the higher will. When they are brought into play, man is more likely to throw his whole heart and energy into what he is doing. Moreover, the sensible emotion may be an earnest of persevering activity in what is undertaken.

3. The possession and use of the passions are of the greatest importance in the spiritual life. They form a mighty power, as for evil, so for the achievement of good. Some one says that they are bad counselors but powerful helpers. Therefore, we must with-

draw them from evil and gain them for good. We have, and must have, passions; the only thing to remember is to use them rightly. They will not let themselves be treated despotically, they will not be compelled, extirpated, or destroyed. We must use them diplomatically, *i. e.,* either by turning away from the thought that has come to us and busily employing ourselves otherwise; or by turning our attention from what is forbidden by putting before ourselves some good thought, and thus reaping good from evil. The devotions to the Divine Heart of Jesus and to the Holy Ghost are of the highest service to us in our efforts in acquiring the right use of our passions.

CHAPTER XI

SLOTH

We now pass to the consideration of certain particular passions and emotions.

1. Sloth is a real heaviness of the soul and its faculties, which tends inordinately to rest and inactivity.

In the first place, there is sloth of the intellect. It consists in sluggishness of

thought, in useless, vague occupation of the mind, in building castles in the air, in mere theorizing, in exaggerated, confused thought, in dissipation, in allowing our minds to remain asleep and drowsy, which is especially apt to happen at prayer-time.

The will, too, has its own kind of sloth, which consists of lazy and grumbling discontent because everything is not pleasant and comfortable, in irresolution with regard to duty, in perpetual procrastination, and in living without any plan, or definite determination and intention.

With regard to the body, sloth betrays itself by slowness, indolence and too much ease. The slothful man would rather stand than walk, rather sit than stand, rather lie than sit. Long sleep is the chief delight of the sluggard.

2. Sluggishness in spiritual things is to be overcome by earnest and frequent colloquies, by vocal prayer, reverent external behavior and change in our method of prayer. In all we do or suffer, we must, without excitement, strive for real activity of spirit. What must be done we must not delay to do. To do what is useless is nothing but another way of doing nothing. Let order rule in all our af-

fairs, and conscientious loyalty in the fulfillment of our resolutions. An extremely effective means of combating sloth, whether spiritual or bodily, is the use of bodily penance and self-denial in general. It overcomes the heaviness of the flesh and gives joy to the soul.

3. There are many reasons why we should keep sloth at a distance.

It is the universal enemy of all mankind. To a certain extent it is inherent in everyone, because we all have a material nature. It exists even in the most active and vigorous, but in each according to his own special character, sometimes as sloth of the understanding, sometimes of the will, sometimes of the body. A phlegmatic temperament, melancholy, unrestrained fancy and imagination are only varieties of sloth.

Sloth is a cunning enemy too, a sweet slavery. It grows up with us, we are used to it, and have no need to seek it. It knows how to hide itself so as to be invisible. The sin of sloth is as it were a sin with no body; it almost persuades us to think it no sin at all; it does its work like a friendly pickpocket. Finally, sloth is a wicked and spiteful enemy. It paralyses and weakens the whole spiritual

life. When we fail and accomplish nothing, the blame may be safely laid on sloth. It blunts the mind and will; it depresses the spirit, keeps the flesh awake and clamorous, robs us of time and of incalculable merit and injures our spiritual life in manifold ways. The worst is, that sloth usually attaches itself to the most important things in our spiritual life, such as meditation, particular examination of conscience and penitential exercises. It much resembles lukewarmness, that pest of the spiritual world, and is its double and ally. No one desires to be its prey—a sufficient reason to use every effort not to be so.

CHAPTER XII

FEAR

Nearly related to sloth is fear.

1. Fear is a contracting and tormenting sensation of the soul in face of some threatening evil that can indeed be overcome, but not without considerable difficulty. Its object and cause is this approaching evil, the averting of which is possible but costs trouble. Its natural effect on the soul and will is dis-

quieting, paralysing and enervating. This effect is the stronger, the more serious the evil, the harder the effort needed to avoid it, and the greater one's weakness. The degree of weakness is increased by uncertainty and confusion of the understanding, exaggeration of the imagination and emotions and excitement of the nerves. Therefore aged persons, children, and women are most exposed and subject to the influence of fear. Fear even affects the bodily faculties, and, under certain conditions, to the extent of causing immobility and even unconsciousness. With this abnormal power that fear possesses, we are not concerned here, but only with its influence on our will in ordinary daily life. There too, its effect is everywhere limiting, enervating and paralysing. In this respect fear is nearly related to sloth.

2. For the feeling of fear to arise is natural, and in itself no weakness. The fool and the beast, runs the saying, do not know fear. The first is not in possession of his intellect, while the other has no intellect with which to recognize and estimate the danger. Moderate fear is even a sign of prudence and foresight. But man, with his intellectual and moral nature, must be master of the sen-

sation of fear, and not allow it to turn him from his duty; for then it is indeed weakness.

The first motive to oppose to fear, for resisting it, and not allowing ourselves to be mastered by it, is that it can induce men to offend against the order of reason, and that is sin. According to the right order, feeling and sense must be subject to reason. But reason tells us not only that we must avoid one thing and strive after another, but that there are some things we must avoid and strive after more than others, and even that we must often pursue a good at the risk of unpleasant consequences. When, therefore, we cease out of fear of evil to strive for some necessary good, in other words, when we fail in our duty, such failure is an imperfection and a sin, either of indolence or of despair. So ignoble fear leads us, alas! just because of some unpleasantness in our daily life, to many disloyalties against duty and conscience—reason enough for being on our guard against fear and exerting all our strength that it may not overpower us.

Still more injurious, we may say, is the effect of fear upon the active pursuit of what is good and the effort to attain perfection.

To extirpate faults and disorders is the first necessity of progress, and a principal means in this direction is the laying open, the confession, of our sins and imperfections, when it is suitable and when we can receive counsel. Now fear hinders this, either by false shame as to the revealing of our imperfections, or by the dread of amending our lives. How important, again, to perfection it is to attend to God's inspirations and to follow them; and what hinders these gracious intentions and leadings so much as fear, the sloth and cowardice of our nature? Finally, we cannot entertain the idea of perfection without higher principles and more determined efforts; we can attain it only by the sacrifice of comfort, ease and that pleasant tranquillity of life in which our nature delights so much. Now it is fear that hangs upon us like lead, and prevents any result when God vouchsafes to inspire us with the thought of some sacrifice or lofty purpose. And so we remain on the low level of an ordinary life. The mischief appears in countless ways, if it is allowed to, making the soul timid and averse to any important undertaking for the glory of God and the salvation of men, such as the vocation to a hard and sublime life. The

injury done is incalculable. We see it in the case of the rich young man, whose beautiful vocation, which our Lord Himself offered and set before him, came to nothing because of that sadness which his fears doubled. The mole is a sad pest to the gardener; and the mole in God's garden is fear. It destroys countless lives. The sunflower of perfection blooms only under the clear sky of joy and courage; beneath the sad, cold light of cowardice and despondency nothing thrives that is great or beautiful. He who cannot master fear must renounce perfection.

If then we would live a bright and truly happy life, let us banish fear. There is indeed evil in the world, and the thought of it affrights us and destroys our peace and joy. Fear fixes its gaze on what is evil; it sees evils where they do not exist and exaggerates them where they do. Fear is a real beholder of ghosts; let us have nothing to do with its apparitions. The fearful man tortures himself with imaginary ills—a kind of martyrdom that brings him little honor and glory. A brave man, on the other hand, who goes calmly along the way of duty in spite of fear's specters, manifests a lofty understand-

[1] St. Matth. xix, 16–22.

ing and, still more, a valiant will. What can overcloud his joy or spoil his peace, whom the spirit of fear and the evils of the world do not appall? The sun does not merely shine for itself, it gives light to all within its reach and upon which it shines. So it is with the brave man; from him flow courage and joy to thousands of others.

3. This is all true and soon said. But is there an effectual means of overcoming fear and being truly brave? Feeling and imagination present the greatest difficulty to the will in surmounting the torment. It is these which exaggerate real conditions and intrude their terrors and supposed impossibilities before the understanding and the will. Feeling itself does not depend on the will. What is in the power of the will is to restrain and modify the preponderance and importunity of the feelings, so that they may not be always insisting upon the dangers and difficulties that lie before us. We must, therefore, strive to make our feelings obey like a well-broken hound that naturally starts up and gives tongue at the first noise he hears, but at a word from his master lies down quietly.

Three means are useful in order to attain

this end. The first is the realization that, in most cases, that which is charming or terrifying in temporal things is the effect of our imagination, which exaggerates their appearances. In reality only eternity is blessed or terrible. Let us stamp deeply on our minds, as a true principle, that "it's three-quarters imagination," and say so to ourselves whenever fear approaches us. By such thoughts we take the edge off the difficulty. The second means is to make a resolute attempt to grasp the difficulty, and to convince ourselves practically that it is thus and not otherwise. It may seem to us that we cannot endure a certain course of action which duty or perfection demands; still let us embrace it. Or, we are so dependent upon a certain creature that we believe we cannot live without it; still, let us give it up. We shall find that we do survive and that we are as well and, perhaps, better off than before. How often, perhaps, we have already experienced this in our lives! With what terror we have looked forward to something that was coming; and when it came it was quite bearable. Everything temporal, however hard it is, passes away, and everything unpleasant becomes with time endurable. Let us encour-

age ourselves by these thoughts. It is dreadful and pitiable that our imagination should make game of us and injure our spiritual life. It gives us untrustworthy spectacles and false scales, so that we do not see things as they really are and judge wrongly of their value. Thence arise so many erroneous judgments, so many imaginary impossibilities and horrors. Imagination sees a monster everywhere,[1] and influences us to actions unworthy of reasonable and generous men. Only by mastering it with a strong hand can one be freed from its unworthy servitude and become a man—truly a man, without fear or reproach. This is why the old masters of the spiritual life taught as the first and essential lesson that was necessary: *Corrigere phantasiam, i. e.,* bring imagination under the control of reason.

The third remedy against fear and discouragement is prayer and confidence in God. So the example of our Lord and Saviour teaches us. We have never suffered a sweat of blood through fear and anguish. He suffered even this, to teach us that fear in itself is no sin and no disorder. He suffered this, to console us, to obtain grace for us and to

[1] Prov. xxvi, 13.

show us the way we should follow if such an hour of Gethsemane should come upon us. We must, like Him, pray humbly and persistently. Thus He gained—not because He needed it, but because He so willed—greater consolation, and thus strengthened went to meet His awful sufferings with heroic courage. Should God permit us, at the sight of some sacrifice He demands, to suffer discouragement for a time, we can trust Him, and be sure that He will be beside us with His grace. And if He be with us, what is impossible to us, what enemy can we not subdue? We Christians are soldiers of God and of Christ. Nothing so ill befits a soldier as discouragement and cowardice. The Christian is dedicated in his Baptism to warfare and sacrifice; he is a noble knight who, as Albrecht Dürer has so splendidly pictured him, rides straight forward on his road, undismayed by death, and the devil, who specter-like trot beside him. Only the hound, the brave knight's playfellow, goes with drooping tail. The Christian fears nothing but God and sin; all else, even death, he counts as gain and victory.[1] By death Christ and Christianity have overcome the world.

[1] Philip i, 21.

In the spiritual life too little attention is paid to the conquest of fear and discouragement. And yet fear is the hapless mother of so many and so great disasters. Fear is the sting by which sloth, lukewarmness, half-heartedness do to death our endeavors after higher things and condemn us to an inglorious mediocrity. "How often have I proved it!" writes St. Theresa; "if at the beginning of some good work I overcame the opposition of cowardly nature, I had always reason to congratulate myself. The greater the terror, the more the soul wins joy from that which seems so difficult. If I had to give advice on this point, I would say: learn never to pay attention to natural fear and never to meet God's goodness with distrust if He inspires us with some great and high thought." Sloth and Fear are sisters and never accomplish anything. According to the poet Dante, the cowardly and fearful are worthy of neither glory nor hate; common dust are they, and who knows whither the wind blows them and where they lie?

CHAPTER XIII

ANGER AND IMPATIENCE

1. Anger and Impatience are the inordinate desire to avenge oneself. Anger presupposes some real or imaginary injustice or disturbance of justice, to ourselves or others, and desires to restore the right order by means of revenge and punishment. Anger is, in general, a fault against meekness, moderation and self-control.

2. Even as men we must combat anger and impatience. As the impulse of anger is usually very vehement, it hinders more than anything else the right use of reason. Thus it comes to pass that not only is justice ignored, but a multitude of sins of injustice are committed. We are often unjust to those who are without blame and deserve our wrath either not at all, or not in the measure we deal out to them. Our motive, as a rule, is not zeal for justice, or the restoration of order, but passion and the delight of retaliation. In that lies the disorder of anger, and on this account it is sinful.

Besides, the angry man injures himself. Anger, just because it is a disorder and a sin,

degrades him, hurts his reputation and makes him odious. The pleasure of revenge attracts him and makes him believe that indulgence and forgiveness are a weakness, a lowering and contempt of himself. At the root of anger there lies illusion and confusion of thought, and these do not elevate but debase a man.

Much more as Christians are we bound to restrain anger. Christ has expressly commanded us to be meek, to love even our enemies, and has given His own glorious example of patience, which all true Christians and saints follow. The Christian plan of battle, so wonderful and divine, is not to conquer force by force, but by patience and submission. This spirit is the touchstone of true Christian virtue and perfection, and, therefore, in a still higher degree, is demanded in the religious state.

Anger within right bounds, and from a true zeal for justice, for God's honor and man's salvation, is good, and a sublime virtue.

3. The universal remedy against anger and impatience is meekness, which restrains the inordinate desire for revenge and the overmastering sense of anger. Meekness produces, not natural indifference, stupidity or

fearfulness, but the love of reasonableness, and of that beauty and nobility which are inherent in true meekness.

How much reason we have to practise meekness! It is a prime necessity in this life of ours; nothing can be done without it.[1] It is not the loftiest of the virtues, certainly, but scarcely any is more needful in our daily life. Sugar is better than salt; but salt is more important, because we use it daily and for almost everything. Moreover, nothing so completely wins for us the regard, confidence, and affection of men as meekness. It is always an indication of great intellectual superiority, rectitude of judgment, ripened experience of life and, especially, unwonted strength of will and a good, humble and kindly heart. What more do we need in order to attract men's hearts, to win them and attach them to us? Their souls rest with utter confidence at the side of meekness. Everyone flies from the neighborhood of a volcano; and impatience and anger are volcanic in their nature. They do no good and much harm, even more harm than we intend. Everywhere we spoil God's work by impatience and make it impossible for Him to

[1] Hebrews x, 36.

make use of us. Impatience has no place in the New Testament, which is the covenant of charity, confidence and peace; while meekness makes us beloved both of God and men.[1]

4. In order to be always patient, we must as far as possible practise recollection, that impatience may not take us by surprise. We must realize that everything is possible in this world, must be amazed at nothing and prepared for everything. We must always adhere to the resolution to bear all injustice patiently, whatever it may be, and whencesoever it may come, in whatever form, from whatever quarter, otherwise there would be no cross to carry. Let us be convinced that there can never be good reason for impatience. When we are excited, let us be silent, even as regards the faults of our inferiors. The strength of good government does not consist in always striking immediately, but in overlooking or ignoring nothing without taking measures for its improvement at a suitable time and under favorable circumstances. Everyone accepts a reasonable reproof; it is the sign of a good and generous will; but no one is willing to endure passion. Judge others' faults as you do your own, with

[1] St. James i, 4.

patience and forbearance. To be gentle with good men is not the result of our own meekness, but that of our surroundings. True meekness, like true charity and every other virtue, must be able to endure and suffer something. Do not complain of another; you will only become more impatient and infect him you blame with the same fault. In order to attain true patience it is not enough not to avoid occasions of impatience; we must rather seek them. Charity and patience are the way to meekness. When you begin to feel impatient, think how soon the occasion passes over. To-morrow you will not feel the wrong any more, things will seem quite different and you will rejoice that you did not lose patience.

CHAPTER XIV

PRIDE

The genealogy of the family of pride is as follows: Its mother is selfishness. Selfishness has two children, pride and sensuality. The children of pride are, first, vanity, a soft creature, but somewhat stupid; secondly, ambition, a restless person who wants to be held in honor by everyone; thirdly, imperi-

ousness, who desires to be under nobody but superior to all, the true devil's child in the family, from whose attacks no one, not even God Himself, is secure. All these have the special family characteristic of striving immoderately and inordinately beyond their power, of wishing to be and to appear, to dare and undertake, more than they really are, or can really do.

1. A special sign of pride is self-complacency, which admires everything about itself and ascribes everything to itself; another is sensitiveness, which troubles itself over every failure of recognition, every suspicion and reproof, every supposed neglect. No sensitive plant is so delicate as pride with respect to its own honor. It is occupied only with acquiring what may secure the notice and admiration of others. It especially loves to criticize; it cites everything before its judgment seat; it judges both living and dead. It, so to speak, apotheosizes itself. It knows everything, no one can teach it; it needs nothing and wraps itself in complete isolation. Such demi-gods are not infrequent in this world; they are those who will be taught nothing by the Church or even by God Himself. Pride is everywhere to be found; in

rulers and subjects, in nobles and beggars, in learned men and peasants. It has been epidemic in the world ever since that old deceiver, the serpent, wrote in our first parents' genealogy: "You shall be as gods." [1] This sentence will not lose its hold on the minds of us children of Adam.

2. Humility is pride's direct opposite—the grand-daughter of the virtue of temperance and the daughter of interior modesty. It moderates and extinguishes all inordinate paroxysms of pride, of striving after honor and recognition, and undue independence; it seeks a praiseworthy humiliation of itself both before self and before others; it fosters a slight opinion of self and is pleased if another shares and expresses the same opinion. It avoids honor, is silent about self, endures humiliation with patience and joy. It does not make excuses, but humbles itself by the sincere acknowledgment of its own wretchedness and imperfection when there is opportunity, especially in the sacrament of penance. Its heroic master-piece is love of humiliation.

3. Knowledge of self goes before humility as guide, teacher, and counselor. This

[1] Gen. iii, 5.

knowledge teaches us that all the good we have or do is God's gift and work, that we can do nothing of ourselves and have nothing of our own but sin and failure. From this flows the whole work and suffering of humility, even the love of humiliation. The justice and reasonableness which lie in this self-abasement form the kernel, the soul and motive, of the virtue of humility.

4. How many motives, then, we have to strive against pride by a true humility!

Then only does truth dwell within us when we are humble; humility *is* truth. The true mirror of self-knowledge shows us that we have nothing of ourselves, but all from God. Pride is therefore falsehood, dishonor and robbery of the Divine glory. In God's sight pride is an abomination, in the sight of sensible men an absurdity. To think highly of ourselves only shows that our minds are unutterably small. And mere honor from men —what is it worth?

And how important humility is to the whole spiritual life! All comes to us through God's grace, but if we are proud, God can give us no special graces; for His own sake He cannot, because humility alone renders to Him the glory that comes from

His gifts; and for our sakes He cannot, because graces without humility only injure us and are occasions of greater pride.

If we desire to live a wholly pure life, free from fault, let us be humble. Our daily faults for the most part arise from lack of humility. What is the reason of our neglect of prayer, envy, discussion of our neighbor's faults, detraction, immodesty, want of obedience, irritability, daintiness with regard to our surroundings, impatience, complaints about our work and the disagreeable things we meet with, melancholy, and despair? All these, and countless other faults, vanish before humility. Little men, it is said, cannot fall far; but pride and arrogance are bound to fall, and often to fall low and shamefully. It is only a great fall that will bring pride to its senses. Pride is the source of all sins, as humility is the foundation of all virtues, not because it is in itself the most exalted of all, but because it is the indispensable prerequisite of all right conduct. Who can take a single right step, if he does not know the way, or his own powers? This is what pride does not know, while humility learns it by self-knowledge. Whoever desires to do anything great for God, let him love humiliation,

which is the acme of humility. To love and seek humiliation is the hardest of sacrifices. It is the "Asses' Bridge" of the spiritual life, the dividing line between perfection and imperfection. Pride is love of self carried even to hatred of God. Humility is love of God carried even to hatred of self. That is the true and complete victory, God's true honor and glory achieved within us. Then only can He reckon absolutely upon our loyalty—otherwise we are always and altogether unreliable. A life free from fault, rich in virtue and joyous is the reward of humility.

Finally, how important humility is in order to embrace and prosecute a vocation, and for the peace and happiness of human companionship in general! Many strive for a higher position, for the honor of God, as they imagine, and in order to be able to accomplish more. But in reality it is only the satisfying of their ambition that impels them. They do not meet with success, failure disgusts them and they are for giving everything up. They cannot endure to be a buried talent. God's interests are to them merely a stirrup for their ambition to mount by. They succeed in gaining a position, and then

pride robs them of all merit in God's sight. Nothing so ruins character and deprives it of all interior strength, of independence, steadfastness and genuineness in God's sight and in men's, as pride and ambition. They are the *animalia gloriæ*—the beasts of glory—of which Tertullian speaks. And whence come disquiet in social life, oppression and force in high places, enmity against all authority, whence all revolutions and all heresies, except from pride, ambition and the lust of mastery?

Let us have done with ambition and its deceptive fruit, worldly honor. Recognition and renown amongst men are worth no more to us than possessions in the moon. They do not enrich us. If a beggar praises a beggar, what is the good of it? Let us seek honor from God by the acquisition of solid humility and self-abasement. Honor will come to us in time: and that the true honor.

CHAPTER XV

ATTRACTION AND AVERSION

The subject of this chapter is charity, especially charity towards our neighbor.

1. Charity is the virtue by which we embrace, with our will, God as the highest Good and for His own sake and rest in Him as our last End. The object of charity is twofold: God and man, and man specially in his relation to God, as God's possession, His creature, and His child. God indeed loves not only Himself, but all that is His. Our charity, that it may be divine charity, must embrace both God and our neighbor. But the motive of charity is but one, namely, God, and all else for God's sake. The order of charity is: God first and above all, then ourselves and finally our neighbor as ourselves. With regard to both our neighbor and ourselves, we must prefer mental and spiritual to bodily interests, and therefore his spiritual to our own bodily well-being, and we do well to subordinate our bodily well-being to his, though we are not bound to do this. Our love is disordered when either we do not love all for God's sake, or love anything more than God Himself, or set our own or our neighbor's temporal advantage before his or our spiritual interest.

The following motives lead us to place charity before all else.

2. Charity is the first and greatest com-

mandment, in fact, the sum and basis of all commandments. All others are but applications of the law of charity. Through charity God takes possession of the will, the basal power of which is charity. Through charity He possesses the whole man, and can lay any command upon him. Through charity He unites man in the most perfect manner to his fellow-man and to Himself, man's last Aim and End. So that charity is indeed the bond of perfection in the highest sense. On this account our Saviour designates the Christian Religion as essentially the religion of charity, and charity as the sign by which His disciples are to be recognized. We have, then, in reality but one law, the law of charity, and have but one thing to do—to love.

3. The love of God and our neighbor has, however, one adversary and enemy, which prolongs its own life at the cost, and by the diminishing, of that love. This enemy is inordinate self-love. It values and loves self above all, judges everything from the point of view of self and seeks self in everything, even in the love of our neighbor, whether we feel aversion or attraction.

4. It is rightly said that likeness and harmony are the conditions and basis of charity.

So reasons for aversion or interior diminution of charity towards our neighbor may arise from opposition of natural disposition and unlikeness in modes of thought and opinion and outward conduct, which, as we say, render a certain individual unsympathetic and unattractive to us. Another class of reasons for aversion is found in real or supposed injuries on our neighbor's part, and from these arise, yet a third class of reasons for aversion, i. e., uncharitable, contemptuous, critical and bitter thoughts and grounds of offense, which develop into uncharitable words, untimely and injurious observations and unpleasant differences, grievously hurting charity and setting hearts at variance. Here we may also allude to the gift of wit and its misuse. A witticism often hurts more than an open insult. Wit is generally a dangerous gift. It often conceals a lack of charity and a satanic sharpness. A recklessly witty man is seldom a kindly one. Only too often he seeks himself, and loves to shine as a wit at the expense of humility and charity.

We must avoid all this for the sake of charity, which is so high and glorious a possession. Let us never harbor knowingly and

willingly aversion and bitter thoughts in our hearts, let us not keep in our memory, any injustice we have suffered, nor represent our neighbor to ourselves as unfriendly and full of faults. It is quite useless to do so. It does not alter the fact, and only confirms us in anger. Uncharitable thoughts are the first germ of aversion. Let us, then, cherish charitable thoughts, that the contrary may find no place in our hearts. A man who has always loving thoughts, says Father Faber, is certainly a saint. There are people who seem made to vex us. They always come at an unseasonable time and always do what annoys and displeases us. There are others, conspicuous for their evil habits and faults, who do us wrong. What is to make us patient? We must retire from human society if we are to suffer nothing unpleasant. Such annoyances we must bear as part payment for the advantage of living in society. It would be very tiresome if everyone were like ourselves. The greatest profit, indeed, of social intercourse is the unfailing opportunities it offers for the exercise of patience and charity. It is generally our own selfishness, our imaginary troubles, our egotism and eagerness to have our own way, our lack

of practice and our ineptitude in understanding others and putting ourselves in their place, which make it so hard for us to see this. A good plan is to treat others' faults as we treat our own. First we ignore our faults, then we excuse them on the score of the good points we have or think we have, and finally we endure them, because we cannot do anything else. Let us never speak without good reason of others' faults. We only make ourselves more angry, and also make others vexed. We should not avoid people who irritate us in order to avoid being vexed. A much safer and much easier way to the end we desire is to seek them out and overcome their evil by charity. What helps us here is to be prepared for all these difficulties of social life, to expect them, to bear and conquer them with patience. To look on everything as possible and to be astonished at nothing in this world is a wise maxim.

5. Attraction is in itself good. It is the magnet which draws man to man and soul to soul, and binds them together in charity. It is in itself an involuntary feeling, a merely instinctive emotion. To deserve the name of

charity, it must be conscious and proceed from reason.

Disorder may enter into this emotion, in the first place, if its motive is not God Himself. He must be the motive, unless it is to be merely natural, not divine, charity. Affection is disordered, in the second place, if it does not observe the rules laid down by God and reason. According to His ordinance, and even our own instinct, we must extend charity to those who are nearest to us either by nature or by divine appointment, such as our relations and those set over us, our benefactors, those who are in any way conspicuous by their authority or their sanctity and the gifts God has given them, and especially to those who are chiefly in need of our help. It is, thirdly, inordinate if it goes out to our neighbor, not from any intellectual or spiritual motive, but from physical attraction, and that perhaps to the soul's hurt. This is no longer love of our neighbor, but real selfishness, and even—from a higher point of view—hatred of our neighbor. Finally, there is disorder if, in consequence of attraction to an individual, the common good is prejudiced. We belong

after all to the human family, and are even more bound to it than to the individual.

Into this category of inordinate affections fall all merely sensuous friendships, which are called "particular" friendships, that withdraw our love from those to whom it is in the first place due and expose us to the danger of sinning against God's commandments. They are a crime against mankind in general and our own particular circle. As the true love of God and our neighbor elevates a man and makes him great and happy, so this spurious love, which is indeed the death of true charity, debases, belittles and corrupts him.

6. From this caricature of charity let us turn to the true love of God and our neighbor. This love alone ennobles and enriches us and enables us to do endless good in the world. No one can excuse himself from the obligation of this charity, for without it he can do nothing, or only what is trifling and worthless. Let us only be careful to love, and we are rich enough to be benefactors of mankind. We have loving thoughts; thoughts move the heart, and the heart the hand. And what else is required for a good work? We speak loving words. How much

good can they do? They remove misunderstandings and banish mistrust. We have loving looks; they scatter melancholy and put temptations to flight, they cause courage and joy and gladness makes this earth a heaven. A kindly, cheerful man is a true power for God in the world. He is an exorcist who drives the devil out of human hearts. He is an apostle and evangelist, he preaches God and by his charity and beneficence sets the Saviour before men's eyes. If we but earnestly desire true kindly affection and charity towards men, the means will not be wanting. "Charity never falleth away," [1] it is never at a loss and always knows how to act. We can never indeed do enough good in our lives; but in order to do good we need courage and joy. And every work of charity bears within it the blessing of consolation and gladness, perpetual fresh joy in good works, and finally the noble passion to be always doing good, and that is the perfect victory of good, the victory of God Himself over the hearts of men.

[1] I Cor. xiii, 8.

CHAPTER XVI

FAULTS OF CHARACTER

1. By "character" we understand the individuality, distinction from others and predominant note in a man's natural disposition. A fault of character, then, is a disorder, a defect or an excess in the faculties of the soul and their relations to each other, which is peculiar to a man and marks him out.

2. Everyone has more or less faults of character. God alone, because of the simplicity and eternity in all His divine attributes, necessarily and by reason of His Nature excludes every inequality. With Him no attribute is greater or more perfect than another. With the creature, and therefore with man, it is not so; he is ever limited and unequal. In every man there is one spiritual faculty or disposition more powerful than the others which disturbs the harmonious equipoise and the even movement of the whole, and tends to mistakes in conduct. That is his master passion.

3. Such a fault may arise from the very disposition of the mind and soul, according as the intellect, or the will, or the imagina-

tion and sentiment predominates, not to the advantage, but the injury of the other faculties and to the imprinting of itself on the man's whole being. Thus we are divided into intellectual men, independent, inflexible men of strong will, imaginative, sentimental, or sensual men. Again, the difference may arise from the physical nature, that is from the temperament, the state of a man's mind which results from the union of the soul with the body and the bodily constitution. So we speak of the sanguine, the choleric, the phlegmatic and the melancholy temperament, each of which has its own drawbacks and its own advantages.

4. In order to improve the character it is first necessary to know it. Although everyone suffers from some defect of character, it is not always easy to discover it. There stand in the way of self-knowledge inattention to ourselves, or vanity and self-deception. It is humiliating to be accused by conscience of a fault, and so one evades its testimony. There are also men who possess so happy and even a character, that it is not easy to perceive any conspicuous deficiency in it. In such natures the characteristic fault is usually fear, timidity, irresolution

either in abandoning or undertaking anything.

Now this is what we can do in order to discover our characteristic fault. First, let us see which is strongest in us, understanding, will, or feeling, and of what kind our temperament is. Secondly, let us mark what sins and faults we most often fall into. They lead us inevitably to their common root, and that common root is our characteristic fault. Thirdly, let us consider what virtues we possess; they too can put us on the track of our special failing, because every virtue has its corresponding fault, just as every plant has its particular blight. Fourthly, let us take note of the prevailing humor of our soul. It indicates accurately the tendency of our nature and character, and enables us to perceive what gives us pleasure and attracts us, what consoles us if anything goes wrong and what are the favorite thoughts which occupy our minds. Other means of discovering our characteristic fault are enlightenment from God in prayer and the judgment of our director or of those around us.

5. We must then combat our characteristic fault with earnestness and perseverance.

There are three special reasons why we should do so.

First, because this fault is a defect and malformation, not of our exterior, but, what is of far more importance, a deformity of the soul and of the beautiful image of God within us. How carefully we remove the least bodily disfigurement! How little we care for a spiritual deformity!

Secondly, because the improvement of character is of the highest importance in the spiritual life. Our characteristic fault is the most serious hindrance to our spiritual progress. It is not only *a* fault, but the source of all other faults. All bear a family likeness to it. To fight against it is to fight against all. To amend it is to amend all. How often we hear men complain: "If I only had not this unfortunate failing, all my other faults would be bearable." It is a very tyrant among the little, and in the end will even pose as a virtue. In the spiritual life everything is possible by means of grace, our co-operation, and merit. Now God gives the most grace where it is most needed; but where we need it most is in our fight against the chief fault in our character. There we may be certain we have God as our ally.

Our characteristic fault is God's and our most dangerous enemy. It deprives us of grace and of the merit of our efforts. No parasite can injure a plant as our chief fault injures us. It is a universal maxim of theologians that a good and happy character is the most important among all the natural means which God employs to lead souls to their last end. This sign-post of Divine Providence we must follow by resisting with determination our characteristic fault. Even here on earth victory secures for us the prize of purity, clarity of vision and peace of soul.

Who does not realize, in the third place, of what supreme importance this combat is in the fulfillment of our vocation? He who has no mind to fight against this fault should go into the desert and renounce every calling that involves co-operation with men. At least he would not then vex and injure other people. But he who desires to live amongst his fellows and to benefit them, let him strive for a good and beautiful character. Every fault of character limits our efficiency or altogether destroys it. In order to be able to help others, many virtues are necessary. *One* fault can spoil all and make it impossi-

ble for us to do good. How much valuable energy has been wasted upon unrestrained anger, imprudence, and sensuality! These make the grandest talents unproductive.

Earnest mortification must, then, be practised in this direction. We must fight if we are to have any prospect or hope of victory, and all depends on that hope. We have to do with *one* single enemy in this battle, and must concentrate all our strength at one point. That is the right plan of campaign. God will help us, because the conflict is in His interests. How successfully the saints have subdued this evil spirit of their characteristic fault! Why should not we? It can only be done by earnestness and perseverance. Nothing can withstand a good and earnest will. Let us do what lies in our power; we shall not change our character essentially; but we can limit its excesses and mend its defects.

We have time, we can will, we can fight, we can pray. And that is enough.

CHAPTER XVII

SOME ADDITIONAL REMARKS

1. To what has been said, the following should be added: We must firmly resolve to overcome ourselves, and be determined to rely steadfastly on prayer as the very foundation-stone of our spiritual life. This must be our one fundamental principle. We must hold it fast and follow it out as the one fixed idea of our life in spite of all relapses. We shall without doubt often fail; but that will not be so disastrous, so long as we remain true to our intention at bottom. The failures will always diminish, and at last the principle will gloriously assert itself in our life and master it.

2. To give up this principle is to renounce all spiritual earnestness, all aim at perfection. Prayer alone will not attain the end. To be willing to pray merely, without self-denial, is an article of the modern sugar-and-water creed. God and union with Him are not to be found in prayer alone. It is a pity that so much trouble should be spent on *such* prayer. After years and long wanderings through by-paths we shall still be where we

were when we set out. It is as necessary for us to practise both prayer and self-denial with fixed regularity, as it is to have two wings in order to fly, or two hands if we are to wash our hands. Both must help, support and supply one another. Both are parts of one whole. Without mortification of self there is no real prayer. It is a necessity of prayer and even if one does pray without it, one does not find God. The unmortified man seeks God in prayer and finds Him not. God Himself seeks the mortified man, because his heart is purified and fitted for union with God, Who longs more than we ourselves to impart Himself to us and unite us to Himself. He seeks only a pure and mortified heart. But it is just as true that we cannot mortify ourselves without prayer. Mortification is hard, and only God's grace can make it possible and easy. But that grace comes with and by prayer. He who will be a prudent man, therefore, and build his house on firm ground, must build on the rock of prayer and self-denial.

3. Undoubtedly the command to mortify ourselves is hard to obey, and the path of self-denial difficult to tread. We men have by sin made this path our only way, and now

we must travel along it, no matter how hard it is. But let us not forget that the way of sin and the yoke of inordinate passions is not less hard, but far harder. We cannot escape sin without self-denial. Our only choice lies between self-denial and sin. The way is really hard only because our resolution is so half-hearted. Let us make a whole-hearted resolution and be confident. The way will become easy and even pleasant in time. Life comes from death and sweetness from strength.[1] The brier of mortification does not bear thorns alone, but also roses of joy and supernatural consolation. But the consolation, like all that is beautiful and great here below, is obtained by vigorous effort. Difficulty and trouble disappear in the joy of heroic courage. This joy is the fair side of the mortification that terrifies us.

4. There are plenty of objections raised against mortification. It is said: "In our days it is no longer possible; health and labor do not allow it." Here we make a distinction. From interior mortification there is no dispensation, and it neither injures health nor interferes with labor. Of exterior mortification it may be truly said that people

[1] Judges xiv, 14.

in these days would have perhaps better health if they practised it a little more. Labor is certainly itself a good mortification. But in order to work well and wisely there is need of mortification, otherwise one does what is useless or what is merely agreeable, and that is not work. You may object that it is old-fashioned asceticism. But, so far as we know, the world is the same as it always was. It has not changed, neither has Christ changed, and the end of life and the means to that end remain the same. Therefore, old-fashioned mortification is as necessary as ever. Again, it is said that interior mortification is all very well, but not exterior. The element of truth in this is that interior mortification is the better and more important of the two. But it does not follow that exterior self-denial should be altogether neglected. If there be no exterior mortification, interior cannot continue. To minimize and reject exterior mortification is not according to the spirit of Christianity and shows a total misapprehension of our condition in consequence of the Fall. Half our difficulties and sins are physical in origin. From the Christian point of view our body is not merely a power for evil which must be

held in check, but also yields the precious myrrh of penance and satisfaction for our sins and all the sins of the world, the price and sacrifice for obtaining special graces, enlightenment and merit for eternity. Therefore innocent souls are the most zealous in the practice of exterior mortification. Another mistaken notion often advanced is that exterior mortification is suitable at first, but not afterwards. We can no more escape from the body and its effects upon the soul than we can escape from our shadow. Though self-denial is, indeed, part of the A, B, C of the spiritual life, we can never afford to forget it.

It is universally the case that self-mortification is difficult to poor fallen man and that vigorous and persistent effort is needed in order to exercise it. And that is exactly what we need in order to overcome evil and to train ourselves to be strong for what is good. The way is hard, the end great and glorious. For a great end a generous man willingly makes sacrifices. Therefore the "Following of Christ" concludes the instruction on the Royal Way of the Cross with the words: "When we have read and searched all, let this be the final conclusion, that

through many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of God."[1] But to endure tribulation self-denial is necessary, well established, all-embracing and continual self-denial.

[1] "Omnibus ergo perlectis et scrutatis sit haec conclusio finalis: Quoniam per multas tribulationes oportet nos intrare in regnum Dei." De Imit. Christi, Lib. II, Cap. 12.

THE THIRD FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE: LOVE OF THE DIVINE SAVIOUR

To pray and hold communion with God is sweet and delightful. To subdue and master one's heart, in order to make it worthy of communion with Him is sublime. But both are hard for man under many circumstances. Then comes love and makes all easy.

CHAPTER I

CHARITY

1. To turn the heart away from earth to heaven, bravely to bear the cross and joyfully to make all sacrifices is without doubt bitterly hard to poor human nature. It would help us marvelously if we had something which would always attract and uplift us by its strength and sweetness, which would ever give us joy and by this gift of gladness make amends for all the troubles of earth.

2. This is precisely what love does. Love is the attraction of the will to a good that answers to our heart's desire, that satisfies our longing for happiness, and by its possession fills us with peace and joy, which ever follow in its train. Peace and joy are indeed the natural effects of the possession of the longed-for good, and with them love conquers all things. Charity is the mightiest power in heaven and on earth. God is charity; and there is no higher gift or intercourse between God and man than charity.

3. But in order that charity may abide with man and bless his every faculty, the good which is the source of peace and joy must be a real conception, an ideal of truth, goodness and beauty. It must be a true and actually existing idea, not merely a beautiful possibility. It must on the one hand be high above us, that it may exalt us above ourselves, and on the other it must be like to us, that we may be able to understand it, lay hold of it, and closely approach it. It must, besides, be abiding, unfading and eternally enduring. If we survived it, it would be something less than ourselves. It must, finally, be a good without limit and without end, that it may plentifully satisfy our need

of joy and susceptibility to love, which are themselves without end or limit.

4. But where can we find this ideal on earth, where all is so finite and evanescent? We must climb up to heaven and bring it down from thence. God knows our need of happiness and love, and has inspired our hearts with the desire for them. And therefore He has taken care for its satisfaction. There is One Who stands on earth and yet fills heaven, Who is at once God and Man, Who possesses and bears the splendor of both heaven and earth. All in heaven and on earth lives by the Life of this Ideal, and drinks rapture from the vision of His beauty. Never through all eternity shall we sound and comprehend His glory. To catch one ray is benediction for all our life, reparation for the loss of all earthly good, balm for all earthly woe and foretaste of eternal blessedness.

This One is our Lord Jesus Christ, God blessed for ever.

We will now set forth traits from His Image and His Life as motives of love to Him. They will be enough to plant this love in our hearts, to increase it and enable us to

acquire thereby a power that shall be the support of our whole life.

CHAPTER II

CHRIST—GOD

Only God perfectly satisfies man. If man attaches himself to a creature in the belief that he can thus find satisfaction, there results only a passing disturbance of mind and heart. Bitter experience will teach him better. How small and poor and miserable is everything here below, marred by countless shadows and wrinkles of imperfection! How soon everything comes to an end and leaves unsatisfied our boundless longing for love and happiness! Only One Good, without end or limit, only God can perfectly satisfy us. It is the innate attraction of our likeness to God and our relationship to Him, and the instinct that we are His children, that draws us to Him as our last End and the Source of all happiness.

1. Let us rejoice, that with Christ we are with God. He is very God, and our God. This is not the place to prove this scientifically. We are dealing with believing

hearts, who hold this truth and only desire to possess somewhat of the treasures of beauty and encouragement that lie in its glorious depths.

2. St. John begins his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."[1] From all eternity, then, Christ knew Himself to be God, the Possessor of true Divinity. He is Himself the Word, the Wisdom, the Son, the Light, the Life and the Beauty in the Godhead. These are all names which He Himself and the Scripture give Him, and which express inherent properties of His Person. What ideas and conceptions do these names awaken in our hearts? What is more loving and kindly, what brings greater joy and sweetness to the heart, than Wisdom, Beauty, and Life? And all this He is essentially. This He is in His Own Person as none other can be.

3. "The same was in the beginning," continues St. John, and "all things were made by Him."[2] As the Wisdom of the Father He was the Book of Life, in Whom already existed the pattern of all God's creation and of His communications with His creatures in

[1] St. John i, 1. [2] i, 3.

their boundless abundance and manifold beauty, and after this Pattern the Father created all things. Who can comprehend the richness and the splendor of this creative power? We were there as living images of His goodness. There we lived and were beloved, and that in a special manner, because He willed to create us, actually to realize His thought of us, while so many others whom He might make remain for ever in the depths of merely possible creation. The Divine Wisdom was therefore our first, original, and eternal Home, the very source and foundation of our being. How could we fail to love Him? How could we forget Him?

The thought and wish often come to us: "O that I could see God! How easy it would then be to love Him!" We see something of Him at least in nature, in His creation. The world of science and of art, visible and invisible creation, are only a reflection of God, but they are truly a reflection of Him, and a means by which the idea of God is built up in us and we are led to love Him. Indeed the earthly, visible creation is so beautiful and noble that we must seize and hold our heart with both hands in order not to lose it to the creature. What then must God be?

Other, indeed, than we can think, infinitely greater and more beautiful than we can picture to ourselves. He is the Author of all things, and therefore every creature reflects in its life and order, in its variety and beauty, the image of the Son, and all things are visible expressions of His invisible glory. Can we doubt that the Lord, the Author of beauty, Who has made all this creation so incomparably beautiful, must Himself be incomparably beautiful?[1] How great, and glorious, and worthy of love, must He be!

4. Christ is God. Christ Himself came to bear witness to this truth, which is our glory and our salvation. How often, in how many ways, and how winningly He expresses this consciousness of His true Godhead! Thus, on that night when He told His disciples so tenderly of the great home in heaven and of the Father's love, and St. Philip said to Him: "Show us the Father, and it is enough for us,"[2] He answered: "Philip, he that seeth Me, seeth the Father also . . . do you not believe that the Father is in Me and I in Him?" "I and the Father are one."[3] "I am the Light of the world."[4] "I am the

[1] Wisdom xiii, 3.
[2] St. John xiv, 8, 9.
[3] x, 30.
[4] viii, 12; ix, 5.

Way, the Truth, and the Life."[1] "This is eternal life, that they may know Jesus Christ Thy Son, Whom Thou hast sent."[2] To confirm His word He wrought miracles in the spiritual world by prophecy, and in the visible world by healing the sick and raising the dead. He demanded faith in this testimony to Himself: "You believe in God (the Father), believe also in Me,"[3] and yet more earnestly than faith He claimed love, such love as only a God can claim. Else He cannot be the God Who said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart"[4] and Who claims all the love the human heart can give, and can therefore satisfy all its need of love and happiness.

5. Moreover, He has been loved as God should be loved. After His departure hence He founded a Kingdom which embraces the whole world and will never end, a Kingdom in which He is adored and loved as God. Since the days of the Apostles and first disciples of the Lord, this Kingdom has been continually presenting to Him countless souls that have renounced all the goods of this earthly life, that have esteemed this life as nothing, have crucified the whole world in

[1] St. John xiv, 6.
[2] xvii, 3.
[3] St. John xiv, 1.
[4] St. Luke x, 27.

their hearts and poured out all their power of loving at their Lord's feet. And so will it ever be. Every true Christian is ready, by the sacrifice of his life and of all that is dearest to him, to bear witness to the truth of the Christian religion. Faith and love have founded this Kingdom, and it will never fail. This moral victory of Christ through faith and love is a true testimony of His Divinity. Many great men have given this testimony, men who by their force of intellect and strength of character have throughout their lives attracted the attention of the world to themselves. Many have endured death on account of it. But who for the sake of a man has changed his life and renounced his most cherished desires? The mighty are passed away, their work is in the dust, and no hand is lifted in their behalf. It must then be a Power essentially different which still energizes in the world on behalf of Christ Who has left the world, works in men, and draws their hearts to Him in faith and love. It is the Power of His Godhead, manifested in victory and splendor on this side and beyond the grave.

6. Christ, in Whom we believe, in Whom

we hope and Whom we love, is God. All that our heart longs for so passionately and unceasingly we have in Him. He is not merely the first, the highest, mightiest and most beautiful of all created beings, He is God, therefore infinitely beyond all creatures put together. We may not merely wonder, take courage, and love; we must also adore. In Christ we have our ultimate Aim and End. There is no truth, or goodness, or beauty that we can seek beyond Him. In Him we can absolutely rest. In Him there is no opposition between God's service and the service of man, between the Divine glory and our good. His service is the service of God, and at the same time our own salvation and blessing. Neither time nor death, the merciless robber of all earthly things, can deprive us of the Object of our love. There will never be a time when weariness or satiety can trouble or destroy the enjoyment of that love and happiness. We creatures are all of us poor and ill-supplied founts of joy; we exhaust each other and are still unrefreshed. Disloyalty or death soon ends all things here below. But with God, the more we seek the more we find in Him endless peace and love and joy. In

this sense too St. John's words are true: "God is greater than our heart."[1] "Your joy no man shall take from you."[2] "He that believeth in the Son hath life everlasting."[3] But really to live is to know, to love and to be happy, as St. Augustine so beautifully writes: "Vocabimus et videbimus, videbimus et amabimus, amabimus et laudabimus. Ecce quod erit in fine sine fine."[4] "We shall keep festival and shall behold, we shall behold and love, we shall love and praise. Behold what shall be at the end, without end."

The first condition of love, then, that its object must be above us and must last for ever, is absolutely fulfilled in the Divinity of our Lord. What thanks we owe to the heavenly Father for giving us His Own Son and with Him all—Himself and the Holy Spirit! We have no need to beg for love and happiness from creatures; in Christ the Son of God we have all we can long for. To reverse the words of the Apostle,[5] we may say: "Father, show us the Son, and it is enough for us."

[1] I St. John iii, 20.
[2] St. John xvi, 22.
[3] St. John iii, 36.
[4] De Civit. Dei, Lib. xxii, Cap. 30
[5] St. John xiv, 8.

CHAPTER III

GOD-MAN

Man's first need and happiness is God, his second is his fellow-man. Therefore, God has drawn near to man as man in Christ, that He may win man's love. By His Nature God is invisible and a pure Spirit. That man may rightly know and understand Him, He must appear in visible form. Now if God creates an image of Himself, how beautiful and worthy of love must it be! And God has done this: He has created an image of Himself in the Sacred Humanity of Christ. He is God and Man, and has appeared to us in all human loving kindness and winning beauty.[1]

1. The Son of God has become Man and without surrendering His Divinity has truly assumed our human nature, endowed with a body and a soul, with understanding, will, imagination and sensibility, like ourselves. This union, however, in no way changed human nature; it but exalted that nature to all dignity, even to the Divine glory, and invested all the natural faculties with a per-

[1] Titus iii, 4.

fection that they had never enjoyed before. His magnificent intellect mastered the whole kingdom of truth, both natural and supernatural; His will was endowed with innate purity, sanctity and a fullness of power that knew no bounds in heaven or on earth; His body, perfect in its absolute beauty and delicacy, was the instrument of Divine wonders. In every way was the God-Man the masterwork of creation, and the revelation of God to His creatures.

2. The way in which the Son of God assumed this nature of ours was the tenderest and most loving that we could imagine. In the first place He assumed it, not as Adam had received it, straight from the hand of God, but from our very flesh and blood. He willed to have human ancestry up to our first parent. He willed in all things to be man like ourselves. He had a Mother, a family, a fatherland, a nationality, an appointed religion and even a human name. In everything except sin He willed to be like us. He is in very truth our blood, our Brother according to the flesh. Moreover, He did not take upon Him our nature in that condition of immortality and freedom from suffering which Adam originally possessed, but as it

has become through sin, subject to suffering and to death; and to sufferings, not merely such as come to men in general, whether in body or soul, but in such measure as the Lord Himself appointed and expressed in His life. According to one well-grounded opinion of theologians, God laid before the Saviour, in the first moment of His life, all the ways by which He could redeem us, proposing them to His free-will. And He chose, as beseemed the Son of God, with absolute freedom all the circumstances of His life and His redeeming sufferings. The conditions of His Incarnation expressed His choice.[1] We know to what point He renounced temporal honor and joy, in how unlimited a measure He imposed on Himself poverty, toil, humiliation and suffering. By this choice He stamped His whole life with the sign and seal of sacrifice. Truly He emptied Himself and took on Himself the form of a servant.[2]

3. And why did He choose thus? Simply and entirely for love of us. God's honor and the satisfaction for our sins would have been accomplished by the least work of the God-Man. All that He did and suffered was of in-

[1] Cf. Heb. x, 5; xii, 2. [2] Phil. ii, 7.

finite value and sufficed for all. It was not His own advantage, gain or glory that was thus increased. His essential glory was His from the first moment in full measure and could not be increased. With regard to His accidental glory, which consists in the honor and love we render Him, He was worthy that we should love Him above all things and do all for Him, and He bestowed grace in overflowing measure to make this possible for us. It was, in fine, nothing but His love for us that made this choice possible to Him. He willed to have no advantage in His life beyond us His brethren and to be like us in all things. He willed that we should, in all earthly sufferings, have in Him a pattern, a true companion and consoler, and that through His grace enabling us we should gain eternal merit for our labor and suffering. What unselfish, noble and true love! Already (when He became incarnate) He loved us and gave Himself for us.[1]

4. And what blessings and benefits His assumption of our nature has procured for us! First, honor and dignity to all our race. By the espousals of the Son of God with our nature we are all exalted, ennobled, as it were

[1] Gal. ii, 20.

deified, and brought into blood-relationship with God. Each one of us is by nature God's child. Even in the sight of the angels we are become worthy of honor. Through Christ our nature is raised above all the angelic orders. He is their Lord, but not their Brother. He sits, true man, upon the throne of God, and is adored by them. Secondly, how marvelously He has enriched us. He is the Head of mankind, and as such shares His possessions with His members, so that human nature partakes of all His riches. The supernatural life, grace and glory, all the merits of Jesus, are ours, and we possess them as our own, and as a fountain of blessing within us. We have a right to them, if we are joined to Christ in faith and charity. Even in the sight of God we are rich through Christ. Through Him we can offer fitting adoration, thanksgiving, and satisfaction, and thus satisfy all the claims of God. Sweet consolation and complete confidence is the third blessing that the truth of Christ's Sacred Manhood brings us. He is God indeed, but also true Man, with all that belongs to humanity, sin alone excepted. What He is more than we, He is simply by His own divine grace and condescension. He knew that well,

and therefore He was and is so humble, good and condescending towards us in spite of our weakness and our poverty. He was Himself tried by all the sorrows of human life, that He might be a merciful High Priest.[1] Nothing can come between Him and us, no dread, no sense of distance and separation. He is no strange gigantic being, whom we can only fear and wonder at, but One like us, our Kinsman, one of ourselves, Whom we can love and embrace with utter confidence. Yes, as men, as His brethren, be we never so poor and sinful, we can be sure of the individual and boundless love of His Sacred Heart.

All this the Son of God is become to us through the Incarnation. The Incarnate is God-made-Man, this great and marvelous One, Whom the Scripture calls the Author of Creation, the First-born of every creature,[2] the Heir of all things;[3] God-made-Man, the mighty One before Whom all knees bow in heaven, on earth and under the earth;[4] God-made-Man, the all-lovely and all-lovable, the very flower, as it were, of all the thoughts of God; God-made-Man, the sweet Charity and Marvel of heaven; God-made-Man, the Life

[1] Heb. v, 2.
[2] Col. i, 15, 16, 19
[3] Heb. i, 2.
[4] Phil. ii, 1

and Consolation of this poor earth; Jesus, Who has made Himself our Brother, and Who, embracing us with the arms of His love, lifts us up to the Father in the eternal home as the sweet conquest of His loving kindness and of the merit of His charity. What can God do more for a heart that is not touched by the glory and the loveliness of our Redeemer?

CHAPTER IV

GOD—A CHILD

1. God became Man in the fullest sense of the word, therefore He became a Child. Childhood belongs essentially to mankind and human life—childhood in its widest sense, including youth, as the time of unfolding from the very beginning of life to the attainment of perfect manhood. In this lies the first difference between the first and the Second Adam. The first knew no childhood or youth. As a perfect man he stands suddenly in the world before his appointed task. The Second Adam willed to experience the full measure of man's wonted life, and, so to speak, to serve from the very beginning upwards. Childhood as part of the Life of Jesus is, therefore, a necessary result of the fact of the In-

carnation, and of His divine resolve to make His Life in all things conformable to ours.

2. Now, what is the most prominent trait of this first manifestation of Jesus amongst us men? The Apostle expresses it completely when he says, "The goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared."[1] Loving kindness and lovableness are, then, the characteristic of His first appearance in this world. With these in view He fixed the conditions of His manifestation.

What is, in fact, more lovable than a child? Man is the aristocracy of the visible creation, and the child is the flower of humanity. Who can behold the fresh, tender beauty, the lovely unfolding mind, the charm of unspoilt goodness and innocence, in a child and not be moved, and not love the little one? Who can resist a child when he appeals to us with confidence and begs us to help him? Now by such a divine artifice the Son of God begs for our love in His first manifestation of Himself.

All God's revelations are gracious condescensions to us: this is the greatest and most appealing.[2] It is so great, that we appear to be wiser and stronger than this Child, that

[1] Titus iii, 4. [2] Heb. i, 1, 2.

we can offer our sympathy to God Himself, poor and forsaken in this world of His. He casts down all the barriers of His greatness that separate us from Him. Behold, God is become as one of ourselves, seemingly even less than we. "A Child is born to us, a Son is given to us."[1] Our mighty God has become Man, a poor forsaken Child, wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in the manger —that is the sign that our God has come.[2] Truly and beautifully St. Bernard says: "Great is the Lord, and worthy of infinite praise, little is the Lord, and worthy of infinite love." So is it with all His Childhood and Youth. How lovable, that the Almighty should suffer Himself to be cared for, nourished, and defended from His enemy by an earthly Mother and foster-father; how lovable the wonderful mystery of His growth and progress, as His body becomes ever more beautiful and noble, as His soul reveals itself ever more gloriously, as it ever pours itself forth in more perfect works; how lovable the humility, the obedience, the piety, the industry, all the virtues of that domestic life, the sight of which rejoices heaven and earth, so that memories of Nazareth arouse in us a

[1] Isaias ix, 6. [2] St. Luke ii, 12.

sweet envy of the Mother who is so happy as to have such a Child! How lovable the mysterious tarrying behind and the appearance in the Temple, that premonitory glimpse of His public life, when He will reveal Himself as Messias and as God, but in poverty and homelessness, in flesh and blood! He cannot, as it were, delay to tell us that He belongs (in a sense) even more to us than to His Mother, and looks forward with longing to the hour when He shall be wholly ours. Even the crib, with its silence and its poverty, is a deeply significant sign of future things, which He wills to accomplish for our sake. Now the Mother wraps him in swaddling-clothes, one day she will wrap Him in the linen of the Sepulchre; now He sheds tears, then He will pour out His Blood; now He accepts another's crib, then another's grave.

3. The environment of place and people that framed the childhood of Jesus makes us yet more vividly sensible of his lovableness. The places of His manifestation are the small but royal town of Bethlehem, high up on the green hills that look down on undulating pastures, full of delightful memories of old days; then the wonderful land of

the Pharaos with its pyramids, in whose shadow the sons of Jacob were trained in religion, art and suffering, and grew to be a mighty people; then quiet Nazareth, for the longest period the home of His youth and the scene of His innocent labor and hidden life; finally the venerable sanctuary of the Temple in Jerusalem, the ancient place of revelation, where He will one day gloriously manifest Himself and where He now, at the age of twelve, shows his loyal reverence for the almost superstitiously venerated doctors of the Law. All these are places of the highest significance, and in most intimate relation with the work He came to do. In the same way the people that surrounded Him are full of both charm and significance, Mary, the royal Virgin-Mother, the true-hearted, saintly Foster-father, the simple, pious shepherds, the jubilant messengers of heaven, holy Simeon and Anna, and the noble, loyal Kings with their guiding star. There are the Saints of the Childhood of Jesus, His first adorers and prophets, who proclaim His advent to the whole world and testify that He is God indeed. On that truth all our hope rests. Without it what would His poverty and His lovableness profit us? He did

not break the silence of His Childhood and declare His Divinity. He will do that later on. Now He sends these saints upon this business. They belong essentially to His childhood, and for us they perform the infinitely valuable service of bearing witness to His Godhead.

4. It is a beautiful world, this world of our Lord's childhood. It is the Divine Child Who lies in the crib, Who suffers Himself to be cared for and nourished, Who weeps and flees before His deadly enemy, Who works in secret and by lowly toil earns His bread. But there is no word of interior weakness or unconsciousness. On the contrary, there is strength and life that embrace the world, divine life in the form of the most sublime loving-kindness and intimate charity, that draws all to itself with irresistible might. What has this Childhood wrought? What has it drawn to itself? All things, the whole world, even ourselves. It was our first devotion, Bethlehem our first spiritual home. Let us think of it. With what confidence we can there pour out our prayers and our love! Perhaps nowhere better. Why should we not go back to our first youthful love? The Saviour, whether

in the crib, on the cross, on the altar, or upon His throne in heaven, is ever the same, ever worthy of our adoration, our reverence and our love. All devotions to the Humanity of Jesus are ways that lead to God. Therefore great saints, men whose intellect and force have renewed the world, such as a Francis of Assisi or a Bernard, have chosen the devotion to the Childhood of Jesus as their favorite. Where shall we find more truth, more wisdom, more lovable might and more winning beauty, more of the beatitude and confidence of love, than beside the little Child of Bethlehem? Confident love is the ritual of the devotion to the Child Jesus. Why cannot it be the ritual of our life?

CHAPTER V

THE WISEST TEACHER AND GUIDE OF SOULS

1. His youth completed, the Divine Saviour began His public work. It consisted chiefly in teaching. He had been foretold as Prophet and Teacher, and His teaching was an essential part of His work of redemption. Without faith we cannot live aright nor be happy. We must have a teacher, and we

possess him in our Saviour, the best and the wisest of all teachers.

2. He had all the qualifications of a teacher. The first one necessary is authority. Teaching and education are a kind of creative art; only God, and he to whom God imparts the right, can rightly exercise it. Our Saviour had not His authority to teach from men, but from and in Himself, because He was God. The office of teacher was, so to speak, innate in Him, like the regal and sacerdotal office. So too with regard to the second essential qualification—Knowledge. He is God, the Truth and Only-Begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, the Wisdom of the Father, the Divine Witness to all the mysteries of heaven and of the human heart. How often when He is teaching He makes use of this divine knowledge of men's souls! The third qualification of His teaching was power, which lay first in the holiness of His life, His life was His doctrine; secondly, in the power of miracles by which He confirmed His word beyond dispute, and finally in the grace that He bestows, by which He moves hearts and makes His commandments easy and delightful to fulfill. Thus He taught indeed as One with power and as none other ever taught.

3. And what did He teach? First of all, what God willed and what was necessary and helpful to us. He taught us to know God as our Father and our last and beatific End. He taught us to pray, to be humble, to deny ourselves and patiently and joyfully to bear our cross; He taught us to love God above all things, with our whole heart, and our neighbors as ourselves. That is the content of His Teaching. We can apply it here on earth. It is enough to make us happy. He dispensed His instruction freely and generously. He could have told us infinitely more; but that we might have the merit of faith, He reserved His further teaching until we shall have reached heaven. There He will impart all to us and that without danger on our part of pride in the knowledge. Our Lord imparts knowledge, but yet more He teaches wisdom, and in faith lies the deepest wisdom.

4. His manner of teaching is, first, clear and simple, so that the humblest man, so that every child, can understand, and at the same time it is so sublime and so profound that the mightiest intellect cannot sound the depths of His doctrine. Secondly, He teaches with wise moderation and prudent reserve. He

does not say all to all, and never chooses an unpropitious time.[1] He never over-burdens the understanding and will of men. What they can bear He demands of them. The desire of the rich young man for his soul's salvation and greater perfection our Lord follows, step by step, by the simple exhortation to keep the commandments, and next by pointing out to him the counsels.[2] He tells the Apostles that they cannot bear the whole truth as yet, but that they shall know it later.[3] How prudently and cautiously He reveals the truth of His redemption of the world by His death and the mystery of His Divinity! Finally, the Saviour teaches with unutterable patience. Unweariedly He scatters the golden seed of His doctrine in men's hearts. Many a grain He sees fallen by the way-side, or among the thorns, or carried away by the birds, and the growth of even the best is slow. But He never ceases. At His first Pasch the seed of faith fell into the heart of Nicodemus; it was at His fourth Pasch, when He had died upon the Cross, that the seed sprang up. How long He wrought at the training of the Apostles, until at last they were what

[1] St. Mark iv, 33; St. Luke v, 36ff.
[2] St. Matth. xix, 16ff.
[3] St. John xvi, 12.

He willed them to be! His patience would be gloriously crowned at last, not merely in their individual souls, but amongst all mankind. Judea, that stony field, did not receive the divine seed of the word, but the Holy Ghost, and the Apostles bore it forth to the heathen, and there created the Christian world, Christian science and civilization, Christian law and Christian art. And still our Saviour's preaching continues its effectual work, converts souls, gives wisdom to the simple, enlightens the eyes of the weak-sighted and the blind, and rejoices hearts by its consolation and its beauty.[1]

5. We need truth, light, and grace; we need a teacher. Where can we find one like our Lord? He is our God; as He created us, so he must develop us. He is Lord of our conscience, He knows our weaknesses and our capabilities. He knows how to make us abundantly happy. He has patience to bear with our fickleness and disloyalty. He has grace powerful enough to crown His work all-gloriously. Let us seek Him with Nicodemus, with John and Peter, Andrew and Nathaniel. All recognized in Him the wise and heaven-sent Teacher, the Lord of their

[1] Psalm xviii, 8, 12.

conscience, life, and happiness. "Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?" they asked. They followed Him and became His disciples.[1] Let us seek Him by reading and meditating on His holy Gospel. How rich a reward is gathered by sitting at the feet of Eternal Wisdom, and listening to His word! If, as the Gospel relates, God Himself comes to the children of men, and expounds to them His mild and heart-rejoicing law, and speaks to them in language, so beautiful, yet so human, of the mysteries of heaven, then these are facts of eternal importance, of a heavenly drama worthy of our constant contemplation and filling us with wonder and love towards the Divine Mind, the wisest of all hearts, from Whom this teaching springs. There we find indeed the wisest Teacher and Guide of our souls. There Jesus is truly our Guide to salvation, to wisdom, to justice in God's sight.[2] "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of Eternal life."[3] Those were the words of faith and love with which Peter overcame the peril of an instant that was big with fate. The victory was the result of happy hours spent at the Master's feet, hearing Him and learning His lessons.

[1] St. John i, 37ff.
[2] I Cor. i, 30.
[3] St. John vi, 69.

"Rabboni"—"Good Master"—was the word with which Magdalen, the disciple of Jesus, greeted Him at His first appearance after His resurrection.[1] She speaks but *one* word, but it includes all she knows and feels and is. The relation of the disciple to the teacher and guide is the most beautiful, noble, tender, and touching. It is the relation of honor, gratitude, and loving obedience.

CHAPTER VI

THE SON OF MAN

The title, "Son of Man," under which the Prophets foretold the Saviour,[2] and which He repeatedly applied to Himself,[3] will here be taken not in the sense of "Messias," "Son of God," or Head of the whole human race, but in that of Possessor of our nature in the noblest and most complete sense. Our Lord is the expression and the perfect image of the most lovable humanity. This lovableness includes three things.

1. Our Saviour lived in every respect a simple, ordinary human life. It was quite

[1] St. John xx, 16.
[2] Dan. vii, 13.
[3] *E. g.* St. Matth. xi, 19; xiii, 37, 41; xxv, 31; xxvi, 64.

otherwise with John the Baptist, His Prophet and Forerunner, whose life was extraordinarily severe, who wore rough clothing and lived in the desert. He never approached the abodes of men. From the wilderness sounded forth his mighty voice and drew the people out to himself. Not so our Saviour. He ever dwelt and lived amongst men, as a member of a family and community, in constant and active intercourse with the world.

Therefore He submits Himself to all the ordinary external conditions to which man's life is subject. The first is religion. He, the Divine Wisdom, the Author of all true adoration, lays upon Himself the obligation of an appointed religion. As a God-fearing Israelite He fulfills every obligation towards God in His visits to the Temple and the synagogue. He even undertakes religious observances which are of a temporary character and not of obligation, and goes on a pilgrimage with the multitude to see John, whom He suffers to baptize Him. The second condition is obedience to superiors, the bond of all social life. Our Saviour fulfilled this in His family, in His life as a citizen, towards those in authority, both native and foreign. All made their demands upon Him,

and He satisfied all as if He were the most ordinary man of the people. He even willed that this subjection of His should be made especially prominent in the Gospel history.[1] When tried for His life, the only charge against which He defended Himself was that of opposition to authority.[2] The third condition of ordinary life is labor. He labored continually. He spent the greater part of His life in uneventful, common work. With His own hands He willed to earn His bread. The highest-born among the sons of Adam is the truest comrade of laboring humanity.

Not only in the severity and toil of our life did our Saviour take part, but also in all legitimate and customary festivities. At the beginning of His public life He appeared as guest and companion at a wedding-feast, and the dilemma of the marriage party touched Him so deeply that He wrought His first miracle, the changing of the water into wine, simply to crown a family feast. It seems to have been the custom, in Palestine, to offer hospitality to traveling teachers of the Law, after they had delivered their instruction. Our Lord, in order not to violate this custom, did not refuse such invitations,

[1] St. Luke ii, 51. [2] St. John xviii, 37.

although He knew that they were given to Him from no sentiment of friendship, and they only caused Him painful embarrassments and unpleasant discussions.[1] He had to listen to the reproach of being a glutton and wine-drinker.[2] Even in His glorified life after His Resurrection, He willed, as good men do, to celebrate by a repast His departure from His loved disciples.[3]

In order to maintain the symmetry of a regular and customary life, our Saviour even suppressed the external manifestation of His personal qualities. He concealed the charm and beauty of His youth in the obscurity of a workshop and a little mountain village. Who suspected His power, His wisdom and holiness? Even in the village He made His home He could have used His higher knowledge, as in many other ways, so especially for the salvation of souls. But He did not do so. He only revealed so much of His sanctity as expressed the character of a pious child and youth. So completely did He hide all that was supernatural that Nathanael, who lived within a few miles of Nazareth, had heard no report of Him.[4] The years in Nazareth are therefore rightly termed the

[1] St. Luke vii, 36; xiv, 1.
[2] St. Matth. xi, 19.
[3] Acts i, 4.
[4] St. John i, 46.

Hidden Life. Even in His public career, when the country rang with His fame and renown, He revealed only so much of His wisdom, power and holiness as was necessary for His mission. Infinitely more was that which He withheld from human knowledge. He, indeed, made Himself like to us to give us an example of humility, but yet far more in order to win our love by His lovable care to appear no more than ourselves. Likeness is always the foundation and the condition of love.

2. The second trait that marks the beautiful character of the Son of Man is considerate, careful and loving attention to all that surrounded Him and came before Him. The second time He multiplied the loaves, it did not escape Him that many of the people had come from far away and were faint with hunger and exhaustion. His compassion was moved, and He commanded the Apostles to feed the multitude.[1] As He met the funeral procession at Naim, His Heart was filled with lively sympathy for the grief and desolation of the poor widowed mother, whose only son was being carried to the grave, and He offered His unsought help. In the midst

[1] St. Mark viii, 2ff.

of the sacred jubilation and joy of His second Pasch, He did not forget the poor sick in the porches of Bethsaida. He sought them out, consoled them and healed the poorest of them all. What is less than a piece of bread? Yet He has given it a place in the Our Father, and when He multiplied the loaves He bade His disciples gather up the fragments that remained. At His first cleansing of the Temple He overthrew the money-changers' tables, but He had pity on the poor doves, and ordered them to be carried away in their cages.[1] How courteously and kindly He deals with the father of the dumb possessed boy and with the child himself, whom the Apostles, unable to heal, would have turned away! The thought of the terrible fate of Jerusalem moves Him to tears in the midst of His triumph, just when He is celebrating the day most full of honor in His whole life and when all about Him are rejoicing. In the depths of the grief and agony of His mortal conflict on the Cross He hears the penitent sigh of the thief, thinks of His Mother and tenderly provides for her. Inconsiderateness and forgetfulness always hinder far-sightedness and charity and can

[1] St. John ii, 15, 16.

inflict grievous wounds. He who is ever considerate has assuredly a good and wise heart, and deserves our love and confidence. And such was our loving Saviour.

3. Gratitude is the third quality of a generous-hearted man. How brightly this characteristic shines in the life of our Divine Lord! He rewards, royally and divinely, every evidence of love and service. How gloriously Peter is rewarded for placing his boat for an hour at our Lord's command, that He may preach thence to the crowd. Peter's recompense is the miraculous draught of fishes and the call to be a fisher of men. In return for the Apostle's prompt confession of Christ's Divinity our Lord creates him Pope. Nicodemus receives, for the slight effort of a visit by night, the grace of faith. For the few steps Zacheus takes to meet the Lord, Christ invites Himself to be his Guest, and fills his house with extraordinary graces. According to the legend, Veronica gives our Saviour her veil as He goes along the Way of the Cross, and gives to the soldiers the wine mingled with myrrh for the terrible moment of the crucifixion. He hands back the veil, and His Sacred Face has miraculously imprinted Itself on the soft

texture. Of the mingled wine and myrrh He partakes, though but a single drop, for the sake of the merciful soul that prepared the draught, to give her joy and express His gratitude. John receives the Mother of Jesus herself—how precious a legacy!—for his tender service of love in having accompanied her to the Cross! He recompenses the noble and courageous love of the weeping women with words of most touching sympathy. He rewards the service of Mary Magdalen with imperishable remembrance in His Church.[1] Finally, is not Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead, a shining proof of the great and extraordinary reward the friendship of Jesus brings?

4. We see how truly human and lovable our great God makes Himself, how He manifests His splendor to us in the winning form of a pure and noble humanity, and how He walks with us along the way of ordinary human life. His life is the glorification of ours. Thus He blesses us in our littleness. We feel He is near us. It is as though He desired to lessen on our account the unapproachable majesty of His Eternal Godhead. He might have overwhelmed us by the revelation of

[1] St. Matth. xxvi, 13.

His glory and His awfulness, and instead He draws us to Himself by the manifestation of the most lovable humanity. It is not merely condescension, it is love, the loving-kindness of the Eternal Wisdom to our race, of which it is written: "He found out all the way of knowledge, and gave it to Jacob His servant, and to Israel, His beloved. Afterwards He was seen upon earth, and conversed with men." [1]

CHAPTER VII

THE SUPERNATURAL

Our Saviour is Man in the truest and highest sense. But He is infinitely more than what the nature He took of us bestowed upon Him. He is in the most sublime degree supernatural, because He is at the same time God. His miracles prove this in a striking manner. Now these miracles are a mighty appeal to our hearts, and that in a threefold manner, according as they relate to faith, love and confidence.

1. Our Lord worked innumerable miracles in the invisible order of spirit and truth by

[1] Baruch iii, 37, 38.

prophecy, and in the order of the visible world, by mighty works of every kind. Our Lord's intention in working these miracles was, as He again and again explained,[1] to establish His teaching, the truths of His divine mission and of His Godhead, that we might believe. Faith is the first and most necessary condition of salvation, and to create faith miracles are the simplest and shortest, and for many the only, means. Where a true miracle appears among the credentials of a teacher, there is God giving His witness, and that which God testifies to is infallible truth. Now since our Saviour appeals so often and so solemnly to His miracles as proof of His doctrine and mission, it follows that the whole edifice of our faith rests on the fact of the miracles of Jesus as its basis. Of what intense importance they are to us, then, and what thanks we owe Him for them!

It is also surprising and beautiful to note how strikingly His miracles correspond with His teaching. He said: "I am the Light of the world," and He made a blind man see; He affirmed Himself to be the Resurrection and the Life, and He raised to life one who was dead; He called Himself the Bread of

[1] St. John v, 36; x, 25; xi, 42.

Life, and multiplied the loaves; He proved that He could loose the chains of sin by the healing of the paralytic. Many of His miracles are figures and prophecies of future mysteries in His Church. Thus the healing of the dumb, blind, and deaf prefigures the effects of Baptism, the miracles of healing the lepers and raising the dead are types of the sacrament of penance, the multiplication of the loaves, of the Eucharist and Peter's boat, the figure of the Church. His miracles, then, are really explanations of His teaching, His work, and His Person. This beautiful interior connection between His doctrine and His wonderful works enlightens our faith and raises it to Him Whom miracles and teaching so wise, so mighty, and so concerned with our salvation, manifest to us.

2. But the miracles of Jesus also demand our love, because they are altogether the acts of His goodness, not of His awful power. He came to redeem us. But His redemption consists in our liberation from the power of Satan, who with sin had brought temporal evil, sickness and death into the world. In this gloomy realm our Saviour's power now operates, and punishment, curse, sickness, death and possession flee before it. His

miracles, so supernatural and divine, all bear the character of loving-kindness and goodness. All are deeds of the purest love to man, and are therefore so many demands on our hearts and on our love.

And this very characteristic of His miracles—their lovableness—works back again to faith; because the object of faith is truths which our understanding cannot comprehend, the will has an essential part to play in our acceptance of truth. But the will is powerfully stirred by the benefits which are bestowed upon men by miracles. We willingly believe those of whose love we are convinced. So the loving-kindness of our Lord works with His miracles even in the domain of faith, and through faith and love wins the hearts of men.

3. Finally, the miracles of Jesus inspire our confidence. As such they are always proofs of a divine, infinite power. How magnificently they unveil that power! In every order, in the domain of rational and irrational creation, in the world of spirits and of men, towards the dead and with regard to evil spirits, His might shone forth victoriously, manifesting Him as the Lord of all creatures, boundless and almighty.

There is no suffering, no sorrow which He cannot exorcise. Even the gates of eternity stand open to Him. Everywhere, in every need, in every trouble, the human soul can look up to the Saviour and say to Him: "Thou canst help me, Thou canst heal me, if Thou wilt."

This appears with wonderful beauty in the raising of the young man at Naim. He was already being carried to the grave; his disconsolate mother was following his bier. How many friends had, time after time, bade her "Weep not!" That was all the consolation they could offer her. But when the Lord says so, all is different.[1] With one word He awakens the dead youth and restores him to his mother. And as He stands before the grave of His friend Lazarus, while his sisters and friends and a vast multitude prostrate themselves weeping before Him and pray to Him, as the One Helper and Saviour in time of need, they look up and, behold, He too is weeping in His divine sympathy. But He has infinitely more than tears of love and sympathy for His friend. He raises him with a word, He restores him to the arms of his sisters and friends, and

[1] St. Luke vii, 13.

thus heals all their sorrow. Such is the consolation the Saviour gives, and which He alone can give. A miracle is nothing to Him. His power and His love extend to all. That love is all-wise, that power almighty, and both are His eternally. Who knowing this, who that trusts and loves Him, can despair? The last evil on earth is death, and this too He has overcome, and He will stand by us, too, as Conqueror, in the hour of death. Rightly, then, the "Following of Christ" sums up the truth: "In life and in death hold thou fast to Him, Who, though all else forsake thee, will never leave thee."

CHAPTER VIII

THE BOOK OF LIFE

There is an event in the public life of Jesus which impels us as scarcely any other to love and give ourselves to our Lord.[1]

1. In the third year of His public ministry, in addition to His Apostles, He appointed seventy-two disciples to help them in their apostolic work. After a short absence, these disciples returned full of joy. They told

[1] St. Luke x, 17–24; St. Matth. xi, 25–30.

Him how all had prospered with them through the power with which He had equipped them, how even the demons were subject to them. Our Saviour was full of joy at hearing these humble words, and in reply bade them rejoice not merely in this blessed result of their mission, but in something far higher and more important, even in this, that their names were written in the Book of Life. It is much more important to be oneself safe than to help others to salvation, and thus to attain that eternal election which is signified by the "Book of Life."

2. On this occasion our Lord glances at the great mystery of this election. He sees, even to the end of time, on the one side the worldly-wise of the prudent followers of Satan, who abandon God and are lost; on the other the childlike, unworldly, and humble souls who cast themselves on God and are saved. Besides, He reveals the cause of the different destiny of the one and the other. It is the Heavenly Father and the Saviour Himself. He says of Himself: "All things are delivered to Me by My Father. And no one knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither doth any one know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to

reveal Him."[1] And elsewhere He says: "No man can come to Me, except the Father, Who hath sent Me, draw him."[2]

By all this He reveals Himself as the co-operating and effectual Cause, as the Mediator and central point, of the whole splendid mystery of election. As the Word and Only-Begotten Wisdom of the Father and as the God-Man, He is truly the source of all knowledge of God and of all salvation, the sign at which all created ways part. Whoever desires to gain salvation must come to the Father by and through Him. He is indeed the Book of Life, in which are inscribed the names of all the elect. This mystery is a splendid revelation of the central place our Divine Lord holds in creation, of His excellence, of His Divinity. Therefore He rejoiced in the Holy Ghost and gave thanks to the Heavenly Father. But His thanksgiving was not only for Himself. In His charity He gave thanks also for His Apostles, and for all who through faith and love come unto Him and are numbered with His elect.

3. Our Saviour now draws the conclusion from the words He has spoken. If we obtain salvation and can come to the Father

[1] St. Matth. xi, 27. [2] St. John vi, 44.

through Him alone, it follows that we must submit ourselves to Him and become His disciples. Therefore He says: "Come unto Me," that is, give yourselves to me by faith and love. "Take My burden and My yoke upon you," namely, the yoke of His teaching, His commandments, and His rule. "Learn of Me," become My scholars, learn of Me to be humble and meek. In other words, we must take our place among the lowly and unworldly, whom He extols as happy and to whom He promises everlasting life. We must, then, put away all self-sufficiency and self-satisfaction, simply seek in Him our salvation for time and eternity, and submit ourselves to Him with all humility and readiness. Then Christ will reveal the Father to us, then He will lead us to the Father, then only are we reckoned among the elect and our names written in the Book of Life. It is this to which our Saviour invites us.

Beautiful and worthy of reflection are the grounds He sets before us for following His bidding. The first is our great and universal need. By nature we inevitably long for knowledge, love and happiness, for full, never-ending joy. Where shall we find them? Not in ourselves, not in the world or

in created things, but only in God, only in Jesus, Who is eternal Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. He alone can give us full satisfaction. We are, besides, all of us without exception, full of trouble, suffering and pain, in body and soul, in both the natural and supernatural order. We all sigh beneath the yoke of evil passions, of sin and of temporal evil and suffering. Where can we find help, consolation and refreshment but in our Saviour? His word and His example animate us, and His grace makes everything possible and even easy. Therefore He says: "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you."

The second reason to attach us to Him is His own Person and His lovable characteristics. We feel but too well our own insufficiency and that we must have a master. Only Christ or the world can be that master. How condescending, gentle, loyal, and unselfish a master Christ is, when we compare Him with the selfishness, the haughtiness, the tyranny of the world! His teaching corresponds to all that is best in our nature, and is consoling and uplifting. His commands are few, His grace, His rewards and His promises are many. He is wise, rich and

mighty, and will Himself be our "reward exceeding great." In Him alone can our souls find rest.

If this is so, must we not cry out with Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life"? He who would gain his soul's salvation must attach himself to our Lord by faith and love, with all his heart. He is the Way, Who leads us to the Father; He is the Truth, Who satisfies our longing; He is the Life, Who gives us true happiness. What is there for us, then, in heaven or on earth, what can we desire and long for, but God, the God of our heart, and our portion for ever? It is good for us to cleave to Him alone, and to put our hope in Him.[1]

CHAPTER IX

HE WAS GOOD

When our Lord celebrated for the last time the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, there was much dispute among the people with regard to Him. Some said: "He seduceth the people," others said: "No, He is good."[2]

[1] Psalm lxxii, 25, 26, 28.
[2] St. John vii, 12.

These last were right. What a man is and does constitutes the whole man. And what he is and does a man reveals in his intercourse with his fellow-men. Christ was God, and God is before all things Good. Therefore our Lord was Good.

1. He was good to the rich. Much injustice is often done to them. To hate or to deify them, just because they are rich, are alike wrong. The one is envy, the other folly. Our Saviour loved the rich and desired all that is good for them, because they too have souls and are God's children. He pitied them because of their riches, and warned them of the great danger riches cause to the soul. But He saw in them and in their riches a great means for the spread of His Kingdom and the salvation of men. Therefore He did not slight the rich and strove to win them to what is good, but this in a way worthy of God. He did not seek out the rich. He let them seek Him. Herod would gladly have seen Him in his palace. He did not go to him; He would be no courtier bishop. He healed from a distance the child of the royal functionary, and did not follow him home. At the prayer of the Roman captain He began to take the road to

his house, but did not enter it, since the officers' deep humility deprecated His coming. On the other hand, He kept close to the ruler of the synagogue, with lovable pertinacity, and followed him to his house where his little daughter lay at the point of death. When besought by the rich He at once complied with their requests. He thought nothing of taking trouble. He did not wait for thanks. This is indeed the charity that edifieth.

2. He was good to the poor, to those who longed for consolation, the unhappy and the sick. They were indeed the chief care of His Heart, for, He says the physician is not for the whole, but for the sick.[1] As the magnet attracts iron, so His goodness drew all suffering ones to Him. He had true love and closest sympathy with poor men, because they were God's children, His own brothers, and so unutterably wretched. And this sympathy did not lie concealed in His Heart; it expressed itself by tears, consoling words and helpful deeds. He did not wait for the unhappy ones, He went to them, sought them out, offered them help and took no notice of their importunity and ingratitude. He poured out all He had to help them; He

[1] St. Matth. ix, 12.

placed His wisdom and His power at the service of His Heart.

3. Chief of all unhappy souls, sinners came to Him. They are the poorest and most in need of sympathy. The world has no remedy for these wretched ones, it does not even know they are miserable and consigns them, poor despairing multitude, to destruction. So the Pharisees acted. Not so our Saviour, the good Shepherd and merciful Father. He goes to meet the prodigal child, stays the penitent tears with a kiss, and restores all that has been lost. His goodness and love to sinners were so well known to all that His enemies repeatedly based their wicked designs on this very loving-kindness, and sought to destroy Him by means of the mercy of His Sacred Heart.[1]

4. Even towards these enemies our Lord was good beyond measure. They sinned horribly against the love of His Heart and His merciful endeavor to save them. At the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple the Jews stood about Him with stones in their hands ready to cast at Him. He only asked them in touching words: "Many good works I have shewed you from My Father;

[1] St. Luke vi, 7; St. John viii, 3–6.

for which of those works do you stone Me?" "For a good work," the Jews answered, "we stone Thee not, but because Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God."[1] He had shown them nothing but goodness beyond all conception. But they gave Him contradiction in return for His teaching, blasphemy for His miracles, the blackest ingratitude for His benefits, murderous hate and the most terrible and shameful death as the recompense of His charity. In spite of all, He continued His work in their midst with marvelous love and gentleness. He does not avoid them. He does not leave unanswered their dishonest questions, He makes of them opportunities for fresh instruction and warning. He does not cease His benefits, until His Heart breaks in death on the cross, and even as He dies He utters a prayer for their forgiveness.

Our Lord was, then, good indeed. As the true bodily Image of God's goodness,[2] He "went about doing good, for God was with Him."[3] As no one can hide himself from the life-giving and gladdening splendor of the orb of day,[4] so there is no being upon whom this goodness and love has not smiled

[1] St. John x, 32, 33.
[2] Wisdom vii, 26.
[3] Acts x, 38.
[4] Psalm xviii, 7.

and poured forth the joy of His benefits. And now what follows? That we should be good, since He has been so good to us? Undoubtedly; but something else first: that we should love Him, Who, above all else, was good. We love all that is good, and all who are good to us; and has not He been good to us? Let us consider from Whom comes all the good that we possess, the great grâce of baptism, of the Faith, of life in the Catholic Church, the enjoyment of her immense gifts, and perhaps the forgiveness of our misuse of countless graces, and even greater sins than this. Let us consider what He has already bestowed upon us and what He will yet bestow—even Himself—and let us ask ourselves whom we should love more than our loving Lord.

CHAPTER X

HIS PASSION AND DEATH

Suffering is the fiery ordeal of love. This applies to every kind of love. Our readiness to suffer for those we love is the measure of our love. Our Saviour Himself knew of no other way to measure His love for us than

this, and He proved that love in the furnace of His Passion.[1] This baptism of blood lays hold upon the soul with such mighty power that to noble hearts it is ever the most compelling reason for returning love for love, suffering for suffering.

The Passion of Christ attracts and moves our hearts chiefly for three reasons.

1. The first is the motives of the Passion. If a man suffers through his own fault, and he endures it in the spirit of penance and satisfaction, we regard his suffering with sympathy, and even with respect. Our Lord, Whose life was immaculate, with Whom there could be no question of merited suffering, was able by Divine appointment to offer the sacrifice of reconciliation for us and for the sins of the whole world. We, the whole human race, are guilty, and our guilt cries to heaven for punishment and satisfaction. Christ's Passion, with all its terror and agony is nothing else but the terrible burden of sin which fell upon our Saviour, our merciful Surety, instead of upon us. "Whom God hath proposed to be a propitiation through faith in His Blood, to the shewing of His justice, for the remission of former sins."[2]

[1] St. Luke xii, 49.

[2] Rom. iii, 25.

Out of His unutterable love the Son offered Himself, He was delivered up for our sake, and for our sake bore our sins upon the Cross. He did penance for sins of which He was not guilty.[1] The Apostle says the same elsewhere most touchingly: "Who loved me, and delivered Himself for me."[2] Thus we must regard His Passion. We stood with our sins behind the Jewish people, the immediate instruments of His death; we took part in that awful deed. At each scene in the drama of the Passion each one of us can say to himself: "Thou art guilty of this; thou shouldst suffer."

Further: our Saviour had introduced a religion with one faith, one rule of conduct, with a new order of grace and a new sacrifice. He must seal this faith by His death, fill the fountains of grace, consecrate the altar with His blood; and it was necessary for us, above all, that He should set before us the cross of mortification and earthly suffering and sanctify it to our eternal merit. And all this He has accomplished by His Passion.

Lastly, our Saviour willed to unite us here on earth in one great and glorious Kingdom,

[1] Ps. lxviii, 5. "Quae non rapui, tunc exsolvebam."
[2] Gal. ii, 20.

and to lead us, so united, to heaven. But the world lay in Satan's power; only a duel between life and death could create for us this home of the soul. Like many a noble prince, our Saviour also has bought us, His people, at the price of His life. His blood has purchased us for Himself, that we might have our home in the Kingdom of His Church. Could we ever forget His loving-kindness?

Thus the motives of His Passion correspond with our inmost needs. For us, for our highest spiritual good, He suffered and died.

2. In the second place the Passion of our Lord arrests and touches us because of the multiplicity and the greatness of His sufferings. They are so great, so manifold and unique, that they stand absolutely alone. He suffered exteriorly and interiorly, in body and in soul. There were sufferings that He alone could inflict on Himself and sufferings that came to Him from others, and from every source. There was no one of those around Him who did not add in some way to His suffering, neither friend nor foe. So, too, He endured every kind of sorrow: insult, shame, contempt, mockery, ingratitude, trea-

son and injustice, which give such anguish to a noble heart. He never met with justice. All the earthly representatives of right and justice forsook His cause, bought Him for a price and condemned Him to a terrible and shameful death. We behold in His Passion terrible and humiliating cruelties, such as the Scourging and the Crucifixion; utterly unwonted and illegal sufferings, such as the Crowning with Thorns and the injuries done Him in the house of Caiphas; all-mysterious and wonderful sufferings, such as the Agony in the Garden of Olives and His dereliction on the Cross, which He alone could suffer and accomplish. It is especially these agonies of His soul which exceed in measure and in bitterness all human sufferings. On every side all forms of sorrow and pain pressed upon Him, so that to Him apply in fullest measure the Prophet's words of the sorely afflicted city Jerusalem: "O ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow." [1] "Great as the sea is My affliction." [2]

But in order to estimate the depth and bitterness of these sufferings in some degree, we must realize the conditions of our Lord's

[1] Lam. i, 12 [2] Lam. ii, 13.

Humanity, the delicacy, and sensitiveness of His body to every pain and injury. He knew, as none else could know, His divine majesty and the honor that was His due. It was only a few days since He had walked those streets as prophet and wonder-worker, honored, reverenced and adored by many, the most beautiful and wisest of the children of His people, while the city lay in homage at His feet. And now this end, so full of ignominy! To offer one's life in accomplishment of some noble deed is certainly to gain the recognition and honor of mankind. Many have done this. But to die the death of common sinners and criminals, forsaken and rejected by God (as it seemed) and man, to die without honor or consolation, in an extremity of suffering that included and revealed all the desolation and weakness of our poor humanity, so that His infuriated enemies were full of joy,[1] that is indeed terrible and heart-breaking. Our Lord Himself made known the extremity of that anguish in His cry of dereliction on the Cross: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"[2] Truly the prophet's words were fulfilled: "I am a worm, and no man: the re-

[1] St. Matth. xxvii, 39–43, 49.
[2] Ibid., 46.

proach of men, and the outcast of the people."[1] "There is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness: and we have seen Him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of Him: despised, and the most abject of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity; and His look was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed Him not, . . . we have thought Him as one struck by God."[2] "He hath led me, and brought me to darkness, and not into light, . . . when I cry and entreat, He hath shut out My prayer. . . . My soul is removed far off from peace, I have forgotten good things. And I said: My end and My hope is perished from the Lord. Remember My poverty and dereliction, the wormwood and the gall. I will be mindful and remember, and My soul shall languish within Me."[3] O terrible Calvary! Where is the place of such utter desolation, where an hour so devoid of all consolation, as when our Lord out of the divine excess of His charity died for us that self-chosen death—He the holiest, the most glorious, the most excellent, the sweetest and most lovable of all the chil-

[1] Ps. xxi, 7.
[2] Isaias liii, 2–4.
[3] Lam. ii, 2, 8, 17–20.

dren of men? How can we forget that place and that awful hour?

3. Finally, the Passion of our Lord is glorious because of the way in which He endured and accomplished it.

The Passion did not come upon Him as a sudden and unforeseen calamity. All was foreseen, appointed and chosen by Himself from eternity. Often and often He spoke openly of His death to His disciples. In the fateful moment of His apprehension He forbade all attempt at resistance. Myriads of angels, He said, stood ready for His defense, and at one word from Him the rabble of His enemies fell to the ground. And with the same majestic freedom with which He entered on His Passion, He brought it to an end. He bowed His Head and died, in token that none could take His life from Him and that He laid it down out of the fullness of His divine power. Truly "He was offered because it was His own will." [1]

A second beautiful characteristic of His Passion was His courage—a courage the noblest and most splendid that could ever be. He suffered neither with stoical indifference and proud contempt of death, nor with piti-

[1] Isaias liii, 7.

able faint-heartedness. He was actively and fully sensible of the pain and was not ashamed to give expression to what He felt, nor even to weep; but this was to give us the greater consolation, in that He truly suffered, suffered bitterly, and by His sufferings made a perfect expiation for our sins as the High Priest appointed by God, Who, according to St. Paul, in the days of His mortal life offered prayers, with a strong cry and tears, to Him Who was able to save Him from death, and "was heard for His reverence." [1]

Lastly, His Passion and death bore the glorious mark of sanctity; He suffered and died exercising the noblest and most exalted virtue. He forgave His torturers, and besought the mercy of His Father for all who were guilty of His death; He tenderly cared for His Mother as she stood beneath His Cross; He listened to the humble petition of the good thief, fulfilled to the letter all the prophets had foretold, and at last yielded up His spirit in one sigh of deepest love to us and most filial submission and resignation to God the Father. Therefore, His death is not merely a holy death, but the type,

[1] Heb. v, 7.

and the efficacious cause of the death of all His saints.

So death came to Him, He entered into His agony and died like one of us, not from any necessity, but because He so willed for love of us.

Underneath the Cross, in view of those last drops of blood which flowed from the wounded side and the broken Heart, let us call to mind the words: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends";[1] "I have forsaken My house, I have left My inheritance: I have given My dear soul into the hands of her enemies";[2] "I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep";[3] and St. Paul's beautiful words: "God commendeth His charity towards us, because when as yet we were sinners, Christ died for us."[4] The Cross says all. Our Saviour could have done no more to prove His love for us than what He has done and suffered in our behalf. It is the supreme measure of love. But does not love demand love in return? In correspondence with this love would a love that offered the sacrifice of the whole world and of one's own life be too much? A noble soul,

[1] St. John xv, 13.
[2] Jer. xii, 7.
[3] St. John x, 11
[4] Rom. v, 8, 9.

who desired entire dedication to God in a severe penitential order, answered this question. He was put to the proof; was led to the choir of the monastic church, where he would have to remain long hours in the winter nights; was shown the refectory, where he would have to fast rather than eat, and the hard bed where he must spend more sleepless than restful nights; and at the end he was asked what he now thought of his vocation. He replied by the question: "Shall I have a crucifix in my cell?" On receiving an affirmative reply he answered decisively: "Then I think I am quite ready to enter on my vocation." It is the same thing that St. Paul declares: "In all these things (tribulation, distress, hunger, persecution) we overcome, because of Him That hath loved us." [1]

CHAPTER XI

THE GLORY OF THE SACRED HUMANITY

The dawn of the second day after the Pasch found our Lord no longer among the dead, no longer in the grave at the foot of the heights of Calvary. He was risen again,

[1] Rom. viii, 37.

and had entered on the life of glory, the third and last step in the Incarnate Life, which here, as everywhere, is full of grace and worthy of all our love.

1. Resurrection is the reunion of body and soul, not indeed under the former earthly conditions, but glorious with a new life. Through the reception of spirit-like faculties the body, without ceasing to be a body, becomes a changed and marvelous being, the master-piece of the wisdom and omnipotence of God in the visible creation, and not merely an ornament and added beauty to the glorified soul, but also a source of all-unexpected knowledge, joy and power. Christ, then, arose in the newness, fullness and splendor of this glorified Life, becoming in a still wider sense the Son of God, even in His Sacred Body, from whose glory shines forth God's own Image, chiefly by reason of the gifts of clarity, beauty, and immortality. Who can realize the loveliness and the majesty of the Risen King? All shadows of earth are passed away, His Face is brighter than the noon-day, He is clothed with grandeur and grace, and as He receives every moment a sea of joy from the whole creation into His glorified Heart, so He pours a paradise of

delight and blessing into the hearts of all whom He approaches. All this we find in the Gospel: His appearance dries all tears, His greeting gives joy to all hearts, the glory of Easter is all around Him. We need no more to give us happiness than the sight and the enjoyment of the glorified Humanity of Jesus.

What magic power beauty has over men's hearts! And yet how often it rewards their service by disappointment, disloyalty and death. Nothing created can successfully hide its insufficiency. If we would be truly happy in the possession of immortal, all-satisfying beauty, we must take a higher flight. Whither, Easter Sunday tells us. The Resurrection is indeed the Feast of the body. Christ's Soul had already won Its glorification by His death; by His Resurrection it was His Body that was glorified in fullest measure. The Ascension brought that Body no further interior glory, but only exterior splendor by Its change of abode from earth to heaven. At the Resurrection, then, He received that undying beauty which makes all heaven and earth glad. Therefore Easter is the feast of beauty, and points out to our longing hearts the way to the highest, im-

mortal loveliness, to the supreme type of all beauty. It teaches us that it is worth while to sacrifice all earthly beauty, and to wait in patience. Our feast is not yet come, says an ecclesiastical writer; but it will come, and we shall be satisfied and overflow with joy.

2. After He rose again, our Lord did not at once ascend to heaven, but remained forty days longer here on earth with His people, ever caring and providing for them with divine and lovable activity, which partly drew Him to each individual disciple, to console, to reward, and to impart His special commissions, and partly had in view the building and perfecting of His Church. He appointed no less than two of the sacraments, baptism and penance; He revealed the truths of the Faith, and confirmed His teaching as to the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity and the Resurrection. And by creating the primacy of St. Peter He placed the crown on the edifice of His Church.

All this our Lord accomplished with inexhaustible goodness and loving-kindness. It might even seem as if after He suffered and died He was even more loving than before, so graciously does He comfort His own, so

generously does He forgive all failures. He Who knows all, forgives all. The sacraments of baptism and penance, the primacy, the promise of immortality—what royal, what divine Easter gifts to the whole world! As the Resurrection revealed Him in His undying splendor, so the Forty Days manifest Him in His goodness and His care for His people.

3. At length our Lord went up to heaven in His glory. The Ascension is the conclusion of His earthly life, the beginning and the completion of His glorified life in heaven. A more sublime conclusion the Incarnate Life could not have. Our Saviour leads His disciples to Mount Olivet and in their sight ascends thence all-gloriously to heaven, and thus as it were gives us a glimpse of the Kingdom of His glory, of which He now takes possession for our sakes. Heaven is the glorious end of all things, and our Lord's last message to us His people.

Oh, the greatness and the magnificence of this, His Kingdom! It is a Kingdom of highest honor, of sweetest and profoundest peace, of all-refreshing calm, of unbroken and magnificent work for the honor and joy of our great and glorious God, of unimaginable

and never-ending happiness. What an honor, what a joy it is, to hope for, to have a right to, this Kingdom and its eternal blessings! With what earnest love must our thoughts and our hearts be fixed upon it, how we must devote all our labor, all our faculties, to its concerns! Heaven is the crowning-point of our Lord's power and glory, of His love and goodness towards us. By his Ascension He has established a firm anchor for our faith, our hope, and love. He is the glorious Star of Morning, that knows no setting. He has gone up in His risen splendor and shines forth from heaven since the day of His Ascension, that we may turn our thoughts, our desires, and our hearts to Him, away from the changeableness and weakness of earthly things to heaven where are true and unfading joys.

Eternal joy is then the glorious end of our Lord's earthly life and the essence of His never-ending life of glory. And so must it be. As God He is the archetype and source of joy, and for Him to be without the fullness of joy would be to change His essential being. As God-made-Man He is the all-glorious Image of the Godhead, the Source, Possessor, and Lord of the joy of heaven, in a

way impossible to any other created being. The earthly suffering He bore was but transitory. He accepted and endured it out of love to God and to us, but it could never be His abiding state. So too is it with us, His creatures, servants, and brethren. Not suffering and sorrow, but joy is the key-note of our life. Never let us forget that. Joy is the watchword of Christendom, our Supreme Lord's order of the day. Nothing else befits either Him or us. Strange courage and mysterious strength are in the very word. It makes the soul eager for self-sacrifice and unconquerable. It overcomes all difficulties, solves all doubts as to the Christian Faith and fills our hearts with love for the Master Whose honor and glory are fulfilled in our happiness. "Thy Life is our way," rightly says the author of the "Following of Christ," "and by holy patience we attain to Thee Who art our Crown." [1]

[1] Imit. Christi, lib. iii, cap. xviii, 3. "Nam vita Tua via nostra, et per sanctam patientiam ambulamus ad Te, Qui es corona nostra."

CHAPTER XII

THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

Our Saviour has gone up to heaven, and yet is here on earth amongst us, as the Faith teaches, in His true Body. This is through the miracle of the Most Holy Sacrament which consists in the fact that our Lord is truly, really, and essentially present, Body and Soul, Divinity and Humanity, under the veil of the sacramental forms, so long as these forms continue to exist. The Most Holy Sacrament is the golden link that joins heaven and earth in an essential union.

1. This leads us at once to one of the effects of the Holy Eucharist, namely, the continual Presence of our Saviour here on earth. Before His enemies were permitted to take away His life, His love, swifter than death, had already provided for His Presence on earth in a new way, by the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. This His continual Presence is, first, a true and actual, and secondly, a miraculous presence. He can be here and in heaven and in a thousand places. He willed to be, to the outward senses, but a little piece of bread, at the same

time living in all the completeness and beauty of His Sacred Humanity, to make Himself so small that a child's hand can hold Him Whom heaven cannot contain—wonders that only His love and His power could work. As flowers among the pearls of morning dew, so is the Blessed Sacrament among other miracles. It is all one vast miracle. Yet again, the Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist most powerfully evokes our love, because it is all-peaceful and most intimate. How small a place He takes amongst us! How little He asks of us; only that we receive Him as our food. The rest He leaves to our love and generosity. He has just so much outward honor as we bestow upon Him. Once, when He was on earth, men had to seek Him. Now He seeks men, seats Himself as it were at their side and makes them happy, not only by His Presence, but by the benedictions that come therewith and the sweet devotions that are the result of that Presence. How work-a-day and how silent would this world of ours be but for the Blessed Sacrament!

2. Our Saviour not only remains continually amongst us in the Eucharist, but also offers Himself on our behalf. This is the second effect of the Most Holy Sacrament.

His Eucharistic Presence can only be maintained and manifested through the holy Mass. But the Mass is in its very essence a Sacrifice, the Sacrifice of the New Covenant. Our Lord twice offered Himself, on the Cross and in the Cenacle. But the Sacrifice of the Mass is precisely the same as the Sacrifice of the Last Supper, and essentially the same as the Sacrifice of the Cross. The Mass is not merely a memorial and a representation, but a renewal, continuation, and accomplishment of the sacrifice of Calvary, because the High Priest, the Offering, and the merit are the same, and have the same effect. We are not the generation in whose time our Lord offered Himself on the Cross and in the Cenacle. What a miracle of grace it is that He should will to renew His Sacrifice, to give, as it were, to every individual the merit of that Oblation and thus to furnish each one of us with the means of offering the homage that man owes to God in adoration, thanksgiving and satisfaction. Even more than this. He does not, as once, accomplish His sacrifice alone. He chooses for Himself priests from among the sons of men, and with them and by their means offers His sacrifice to God. Thus He makes it really our own,

by His co-operation gives infinite value to the oblation we bring and enables us to offer God an homage worthy of His eternal majesty. He never tires of offering this sacrifice to the Divine glory. With the sun, Holy Mass encircles the world, from a thousand fresh altars. Its fragrance continually ascends to God and consecrates the whole earth as His living temple. How rich beyond all thought, even with respect to God Himself, the grace and love of our Saviour makes us through the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Nowhere does God attain the end of His creation so completely and so gloriously as in the Sacrifice of the Mass.

3. The third effect of the Eucharist results from the fact that it is not only a sacrifice, but a sacrament as well. As a sacrifice it relates in the first instance to God, as a sacrament to ourselves. Through the Blessed Sacrament God bestows upon us the grace by which we obtain supernatural life and are saved. This supernatural life was given us in Baptism; it is sustained and strengthened by the Sacrament of the Altar. In all other sacraments Christ makes a visible sign the means of grace, in the Sacrament of the Altar

He makes use of His own Body as the instrument of grace.

The Blessed Sacrament, then, is the Body of Jesus under the form of bread, received as food. What high and glorious gifts of love He includes in this gift of Himself!

The essence of the sacrament is here nothing less than His Body, Which He bestows upon us, Which He makes the instrument of His grace, as once He used His divine hand to heal the sick and raise the dead, and in a way yet far more full of grace. He gives us His Body, the supreme sanctuary and miracle of heaven and earth, and with His Body He also gives His soul, His divinity, His merit, and His grace; all that He is, all that He has, He makes our own. Is there in all His creation a being more rich or more honored than he who bears in his heart his God and Saviour? Could we ask more of Him? Could He give us more?

Because our Saviour Himself is the very essence of this sacrament, it follows that the Holy Eucharist is the most sublime and greatest of all sacraments, not only in dignity, but also in efficacy. Holy Communion is the most intimate union, at once

corporal and spiritual, of ourselves with Christ, and therefore it must excel all other sacraments in power to sustain and increase the supernatural life within us. As Christ is the Life, so Holy Communion is the Sacrament of Life.[1] On this account the most exalted virtues and spiritual states, such as charity, peace, joy, courage, chastity, virginity, self-sacrifice, are ascribed in special wise to the Sacrament of the Altar as its direct effects. The divine life which Christ possesses becomes ours through Holy Communion.[2] Even our body receives through it the pledge of a glorious resurrection. How exactly the outward forms of the Blessed Sacrament express these great effects of its reception! Bread and wine are the symbols of life, eating is the symbol of most intimate union and of strength, a festal meal the expression of joy and hearty friendship. What, in fine, more strikingly testifies than this outward sign to the unselfish and confiding love of our Saviour towards us? He perceived that nothing is more intimately united with us than bodily nourishment. It enters into us, is transformed into our substance and be-

[1] St. John vi, 54–58. [2] St. John vi, 58.

comes one with us. He would not allow any creature to be united with us more intimately than Himself. So He made Himself our food, both for soul and body. Indeed we rather become a part of Himself than He a part of us. He, the Mighty God, receives us that we may after a spiritual manner be transformed into Himself and, so far as we are able, be made partakers of His Divinity. We behold this ordinary, little, apparently lifeless piece of bread. Can our great God thus make Himself unimportant, humiliate Himself, appear helpless? So, indeed, He possesses Himself of the object of His love, a human heart, that He may give it joy, honor and enrich it. How sweet and touching a thought it is, that nowhere does a consecrated Host find its end but in a human heart!

4. How wide-embracing, how great, and how divine appears our Lord's love towards us in the various applications of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar! How wonderful a light is thrown on His words, that He would not leave us orphans, that He would ever abide with us, that He as the Vine, we as the branches, form an organic unity. In the Eucharist, He extends, in a manner, His Incarnation to all men. In the Incarnation

He only imparted Himself to His own Humanity; in Holy Communion He bestows Himself upon each of us, uniting each to Himself in most intimate union. By creation He is our Father, by preservation our Sustainer and Guide, by justification our Redeemer. What is He by the Sacrament of the Altar? The relationship is so inexpressibly intimate as to be beyond our words. Now the motive which induced Him to do all this for us was not only sympathy, mercy and goodness, but boundless and self-forgetting love, which even now does not shrink from sacrifice. He could have made that sacrifice lighter; it would have sufficed if He had been present in one place in the world, if He had rejoiced us once in our lives by His visit to our souls and had made that visit only to those worthy of it. It would have sufficed if He were really present only at the moment of reception. He rejected all these limitations, and thus exposed Himself to a thousand indignities and irreverences. Let us not forget through what a bitter sea of ingratitude and injury He must pass every time He stands before our hearts that He may unite us sacramentally to Himself and knocks at the door like the Bridegroom in the Canticle of Canticles:

"Open to me, My love, My head is full of dew, and My locks of the drops of the night." [1] Where can we more fitly offer love for love to our Saviour than in the Most Holy Sacrament, from which such a glow of love streams forth upon us and which is rightly called the Sacrament of Love? Although His perpetual Presence is with us everywhere and at every hour, yet in Holy Mass He offers Himself to us in the closest of all unions. How overwhelming a motive, how wonderful a means, for increasing continually in our love for Him!

CHAPTER XII

HIS LAST INJUNCTIONS

The last words and wishes of a beloved friend from whom we are about to part, of a dying father or mother, remain with us all our life long. We treasure them as a sacred legacy and a pledge of heavenly blessing. And therefore our Saviour, before He went forth to His Passion, left to His Apostles and to us all a last testament, in that parting discourse, so full of celestial beauty, in

[1] Cant. v, 2.

which He imparted to us the deepest mysteries of His Heart and His last divine charge. These last injunctions must also be the last subject considered in this little book.

1. Now what are they? Simply what all who love each other intimately and are forced to part earnestly desire and beg of each other —that they may remain united at least in spirit. It is this that our Saviour, now that His bodily Presence must be taken from us, so earnestly and repeatedly enjoins: "Abide in Me." [1]

2. We ask now how this union is to be understood. Obviously the bond uniting Him and us can only be of a spiritual character, but, as He Himself explains, it is something real and living, not transitory, but enduring and rooted in the very essence of our being. On this account our Lord employs the beautiful, deeply significant parable of the Vine and the branches.[2] The branches are organically united to the vine-stock and form with it one fellowship of life and being. So must be, in its degree, our union with Christ, truly accomplished, as it is, by sanctifying grace. This grace is a real, spiritual and abiding faculty of our souls, a partaking by

[1] St. John xv, 4, 5, 6. [2] xv, 1.

the creature in the Divine Nature and an image of the Divine Sonship. It makes us partakers, in a spiritual manner of that Sonship, so that we become like the Divine Saviour, Who is the Son of God by Nature. So long as sanctifying grace remains in us, all that He says of this union is fulfilled, *i. e.*, He is and remains within us, that we may be one in Him and in the Father, as They are One.[1] But the Father and the Son are One by the possession of the same Divine Nature; and it is an image of that Nature that we possess in sanctifying grace. Its possession is the first, most essential and abiding condition of union with Christ, as it is in general the basis of all gifts and powers that make up the spiritual life.

3. This sanctifying grace, which attaches itself to the very essence of our souls, brings with it supernatural powers and faculties which enable us to prove the reality of our spiritual life by virtuous deeds. Our Lord reckons three virtues that prove our union with Him.

It is proved, first, by faith. Faith is the first step in our approach to God, our union with Him through our understanding, by

[1] St. John xvii, 21–23.

which we acknowledge and hold as true His revelation of Himself as God, our highest Good and our last End. He gives us the sublimest motives for this union with Him by faith. These are, the express attestation that He is God, then the fact of His miracles, and lastly the absolute necessity of holding fast to Him by faith if we would not be cast away and would bring forth fruit unto eternal life. "You believe in God, believe also in me. . . . He that seeth Me seeth the Father also. . . . Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? Otherwise believe for the very works' sake. Amen, amen, I say to you, he that believeth in Me, the works that I do, he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do." [1] "I am the Vine; you the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone abide not in Me he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither." [2] How we must treasure faith, then, and how earnestly must we exercise ourselves in faith, by which alone we can apprehend Christ and by which the light of love breaks forth upon us to our unutterable joy!

[1] St. John xiv, 1, 9, 11, 12. [2] xv, 5, 6.

Love is the second and most essential condition of union with our Saviour; love is indeed the perpetual affection of the will towards the loved one. "Abide in My love." [1] It is most consoling that our Lord here explains in what love essentially consists, *i. e.*, not in sensible sweetness, but in the continual direction of our will towards the keeping of God's commandments.[2] By this is meant the habit of charity, which is included in sanctifying grace and remains with us so long as we commit no grievous sins and thus maintain our will in union with Him.

Our Lord lays special stress on this love, and as its motive points out, first, the Father's love to us if we love His Son, Whom He has given to us; [3] secondly, His own love, which He has proved by choosing us and imparting to us as His friends all heavenly mysteries [4] and by laying down His Life for our sakes; [5] thirdly and finally, He promises, as the reward of the loving soul, many extraordinary illuminations from the Three Divine Persons, Who will in a special manner reveal Themselves to, and bestow Them-

[1] St. John xv, 9.
[2] xiv, 15, 21, 23, 24; xv, 10, 14.
[3] xiv, 21, 23; xvi, 27.
[4] xv, 15.
[5] xv, 13.

selves upon, such a soul.[1] Thus He makes known the sublime and sweet mystery of grace, which even here below can, in various degrees, mystically unite the soul with God in a union which is already the dawn of heavenly love and happiness.

But faith and love can only effectually prevail with God through prayer, and this is the third condition of union with Him. The prayer our Saviour enjoins in His farewell discourse has a special and most intimate relation to Him because it must be said in His Name.[2] It is so offered, if the soul is interiorly united with Him by grace, prays with His intentions, for the glory of God and the good estate of His Kingdom, and petitions through the merits of our Lord. This view of prayer invites us to pray as scarcely any other motive can. It sets forth prayer, made according to Christ's intention, as a compensation to His Apostles for the withdrawal of His visible presence. What He was to them in His intercourse, that will He be to us in prayer. He will instruct, console, protect us, and provide for all our needs. Therefore He says to His Apostles that hitherto they had not asked anything in His

[1] St. John xiv, 23.
[2] xiv, 13, 14; xv, 16; xvi, 23, 26.

Name, because He was with them.[1] Now he wills to do everything for them, and for us, through prayer. The efficacy of prayer in His Name is great beyond our reckoning. It it, as it were, *His* prayer, and therefore is all-prevailing.[2] This is so true that such praying does not even need His commendation.[3] It is the means of most intimate union with Him and the mightiest instrument for the exaltation and spread of His Kingdom. Can there be a stronger, a more beautiful, or a more sublime motive for prayer?

This is, then, our Lord's last charge: that we be united to Him by grace, by faith, by love and by prayer. This is the last and most consoling revelation that He loves us and wills that we should love Him in return; His last sacred command, vouched for by His own word; His last and most emphatic desire. Must we not hold it sacred and precious? It suffices for our union with Him. Faith unites our understanding, love our will, prayer our memory and affection to our Lord. So our whole being is transplanted into Him, passes over to Him. It is no longer we that live, but Christ that lives in us.[4]

[1] St. John xvi, 24.
[2] xiv, 14; xv, 16.
[3] xvi, 26.
[4] Gal. ii, 20.

We began with prayer and with love, which seeks and clings to Christ by prayer. Let us turn back to our beginning. Prayer, self-denial, and the love of God, interiorly associated with each other form the threefold link of the spiritual life and of Christian perfection, whether in the freedom of the world or the peace of the cloister. But none of the three must fail. Where there is no prayer, there is no strength in self-denial, no deep comprehension of God and no love of Him; where self-denial is wanting, prayer will vanish, and inordinate self-love leave no place for the love of God; finally, where there is no love for Him, prayer and glad self-sacrifice are impossible. The three in union, mutually and actively helping each other, bring the soul at last to the crown of justice.

There are three necessary conditions, then, to our salvation; but the greatest of them is love,[1] the bond of perfection, the Lord's first and last commandment. God simply asks for love, all the rest He leaves to us. He is the God and the unchallenged Master of our hearts simply through love. To love, difficulties are no difficulties, but means and op-

[1] I Cor. xiii, 13.

portunities the soul desires in order to prove her loyalty. "Love, and do what thou wilt," says St. Augustine,[1] and St. John: "We have known, and have believed the charity which God hath to us."[2] Nothing can withstand this love of Jesus Crucified; it has overcome the world. Our Lord, our Redeemer and our God, how infinitely lovable He is! He has loved us even unto death, and loves us still unutterably. He wills to be loved by us. He appeals to our hearts and bids us love Him. Is not that enough for us, in our littleness and poverty, needing love and happiness so sorely? Love is so infinitely great a good, so infinitely to be desired, that no pains can ever be too much to gain it. We must continually pray that we may not close our eyes in death before we have attained to perfect love. To know and love the Saviour is our highest gain both for time and eternity. Eternally to be pitied is he to whom this knowledge and this love have not come in this life. Our wisdom, our holiness and happiness are just in proportion to our knowledge and love of Jesus. And if our life be but a journey along the way of the Cross, let us not be grieved It is a trial of our patience,

[1] In Epist. Joannis ad Parthos, tract. 7, n. 8.
[2] St. John iv, 16.

but the end is worth the pain of this beginning. If sensible joy were granted here, love's journey would no doubt be easier, but not more meritorious. In heaven it needs no skill to love God, but here, in the life of faith, and often in conflict with powers that are either hateful or alluring, it is a work that needs the highest skill and glorifies God in the highest degree. But we trust that even on earth a day will come when there will be vouchsafed to us that knowledge of our Lord, so full of beauty and of joy that is the dawn of the eternal bliss of heaven.

THE END

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